ENTERTAINMENT/A3-1

Kristine Hermosa tells all about civil wedding

INFOTECH/B2

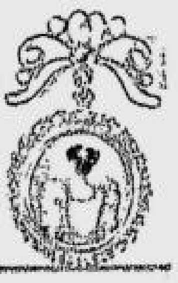
Study shows high demand for software eng'rs

BUSINESS/B1

Stable crude oil prices forecast for next year

LIFESTYLE/C3

The art of very small painting



Guns swapped for holiday presents in California city

NO TO GUNS LALO NA PAG PASKO!

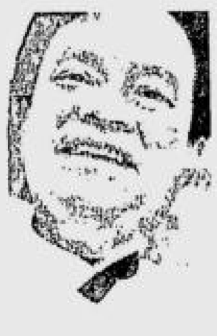
COMPTON, CALIFORNIA—"Big Daddy" Willis came to Compton to turn an illegal homemade pistol into Christmas dinner. Charlene Watt planned to turn three shotguns into a plasma TV.

GUNS SWAPPED/ A16

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Ex-Senator Barbers dies

By Tony S. Bergonia and Michael Lim Ubac


BARBERS

ROBERT Z. BARBERS, former senator, congressman, interior secretary and police officer, died yesterday of throat

EX-SENATOR/ A6

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
Monday, December 26, 2005 ★ 6 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 18 P18
website: www.inq7.net

Unite against terror, Pope tells the world

Urges new world order to correct inequities

VATICAN CITY—POPE Benedict XVI, in his first Christmas address, on Sunday urged humanity to unite against terrorism, poverty and environmental blight and called for a "new world order" to correct economic imbalances.

The 78-year-old German Pope made his comments to tens of thousands of pilgrims gathered under umbrellas in a rainy St. Peter square for his "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) message and blessing.

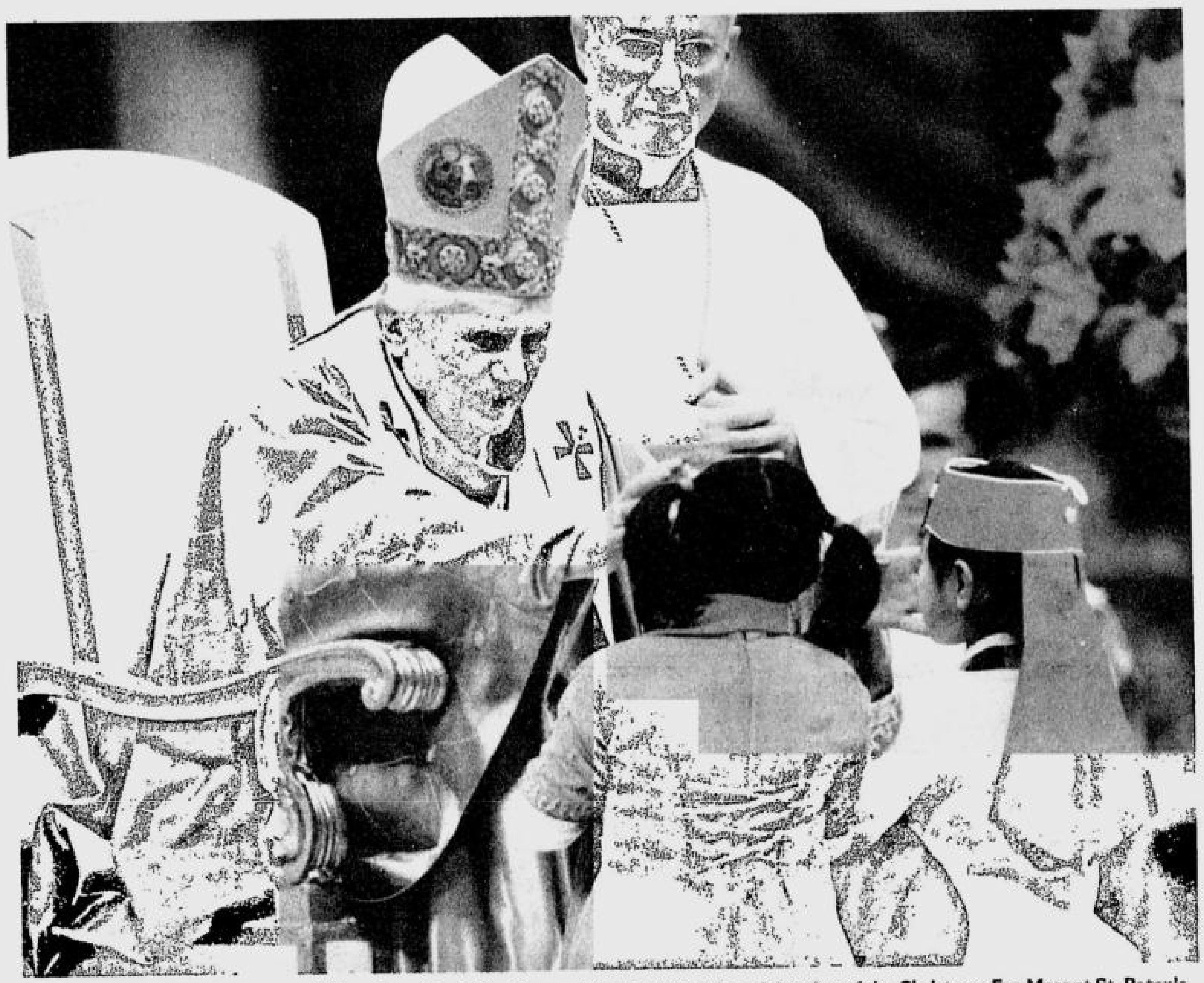
In his address, telecast live from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of millions of people in nearly 40 countries, Benedict also urged his listeners not to let technological achievements blind them to true human values.

He said humanity should look to the Christ child for encouragement in times of difficulty and fear.

"A united humanity will be able to confront the many troubling problems of the present time—from the menace of terrorism to the humiliating poverty in which millions of human beings live, from the proliferation of weapons to the pandemics and the environmental destruction which threatens the future of our planet," Benedict said.

"Do not fear; put your trust in Him! The life-giving power of His light is an incentive for building a

UNITE/ A6



POPE Benedict XVI blesses two children from the Philippines and Korea during the celebration of the Christmas Eve Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. In his homily, the Pope says that love brings light in this world and hatred darkness. AP

Rosales: Now is time to change

By Christian V. Esguerra

WITH LESS THAN A WEEK TO go before 2006 begins, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales said the faithful should not wait for the "optimum climate" to welcome Jesus Christ, the Savior of humanity according to Catholic belief.

Rosales said the Savior could come even in the face of crises, conflicts and disasters, similar to what happened when He was made flesh more than 2,000 years ago.

"If we have to change, let us not wait for the optimum climate, condition or time. I would say the time is now," Rosales told reporters over lunch at his residence.

He said there was no such

ROSALES/ A6

Memories of purges haunt Reds

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE GHOSTS OF HUNDREDS OF victims of bloody purges haunt the Communist Party of the Philippines on its 37th founding anniversary.

Some of the best peasant leaders, youth and community organizers were murdered in the self-purgation that was launched a quarter century ago as the party was heading toward the peak of its popularity under the regime of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The strongman had been the poster boy of recruiters to the Maoist-leaning CPP, founded on Dec. 26, 1968 by Jose Ma. Sison, a former political science professor now in self-exile in the Netherlands.

The cleansing began in 1981 under a plan called "Cadena de Amor," mounted in southern Luzon. It was prompted by fears that the CPP—and its armed wing, the New People's Army—had been infiltrated by Marcos agents.

By mid-1980s, the project came to be known as "Operation Ahos" and the purge intensified. Ahos is a Cebuano term for garlic. According to Filipino folklore, it is a potent weapon against

MEMORIES/ A16

GMA now stronger than ever, says Bunye

By Christine O. Avendaño and Delfin T. Mallari
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo has survived her worst political crisis and emerged stronger, the Palace said in a Christmas statement amid a fresh challenge from communist insurgents offering an alliance with disgruntled military elements.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the 58-year-old President's "most bruising political battle of her life"—sparked by allegations in the "Hello Garci" tapes that she stole last year's presidential election—was "now behind us."

"In the process, she proved to her detractors that she is stronger than any of them ever imagined," Bunye said.

"To say that 2005 has been a challenging year would be an understatement," he said in his weekly newspaper column.

The Communist Party of the Philippines, in a statement marking its 37th founding anniversary, said it had ordered its New People's Army guerrillas to intensify attacks against the government while it pursued an alliance with disgruntled soldiers.

The statement said a broad, united front of left-wing legal forces, anti-Arroyo conservative political parties, coalitions and movements and anti-Arroyo members of the military and police had been developing since June 2005 when the wiretapping scandal broke out.

"At the appropriate time, the party would be willing to openly enter an alliance that includes the anti-Arroyo military and police forces not only for the purpose of ousting the Arroyo regime but also for the purpose of

GMA NOW/ A16

MOURNING AMID REVELRY

Christmas Day in tsunami zone tinged with sadness

PHUKET, THAILAND—CHRISTMAS CELEbrations on Sunday were muted in regions struck by the Indian Ocean tsunami a year ago, as mourners mixed with revelers on beaches where some of the hundreds of thousands of victims died.

Western tourists who survived the killer waves and relatives of some of those who didn't were among those at Thailand's famous beach resort district around Phuket island, which was battered by the Dec. 26 disaster last year. Many will attend commemoration ceremonies today.

In Aceh, the Indonesian province hardest hit, aid workers joined more than 100 people from the small Christian community at an 18th century Catholic church that still bears deep cracks in the walls from the massive earthquake that spawned the disaster.

"It's not as cheerful as normal, because we're still remembering our friends and family who died," said Santiani Saraghi, 47, whose house was swamped by the tsunami's surging waters.

Nearly two-thirds of the estimated 223,000 people who were killed in the tsunami came from Aceh, a predominantly Muslim province closest to the epicenter of the monster earthquake that spawned the giant waves. Only a tiny fraction of those killed were ever identified; many were washed out to sea.

The largest mass grave in Aceh holds some 46,000 bodies, dumped three-deep in hastily dug pits in the days after the tsunami. One year on, relatives of those died flocked to the site to pray for their souls—and to try to come to terms with their grief.

"After I come here I somehow feel satisfied," said Dasniati, who traveled 15 hours to lay petals Sunday on the field where she believes her 10-year-old daughter is buried. "I pray that Allah accepts her at his side."

After the Dec. 26 disaster, the soccer pitch-sized field resembled a scene from hell.

Bloated, rotting corpses lay piled up on the

CHRISTMAS/ A7

AUSTRIAN couple Sigi and Silvia Gsteu remember their friends, who died in last last year's tsunami, on the spot where the bodies were found on Nang Tong beach in southern Thailand. AP

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. Widespread rains over Eastern and Central Visayas and Northern Mindanao may trigger flashfloods and landslides. The rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to cloudy with light passing showers.

COMPILED BY CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/12/26/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Second FrontPage

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We're not recruiting—MILF

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE MILITARY MIGHT HAVE MISTAKEN EFFORTS by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to "validate" its membership as a recruitment program, MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said yesterday.

Kabalu categorically denied remarks by Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan, chief of the Armed Forces' Southern Command, that the secessionist group was on recruitment mode.

"We're not recruiting or training new members. How can we be preparing for war when the peace process is nearing its completion?" Kabalu said on the phone.

"It seems there are people who want to rock the boat, which is about to dock," he said.

According to Kabalu, the MILF has filed a formal protest with the government peace panel through the Malaysian secretariat saying the recent military statements "tend to undermine the peace negotiation."

Biodata forms

He said the MILF recently directed its armed members to fill up "biodata forms," which would be used to "weed out" what the military had said were "the bad eggs" in the secessionist group.

The military had earlier aired accusations that certain sectors of the MILF were coddling members of the regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah and its supposed local ally, the Abu Sayyaf.

"We have set up a mechanism to validate the members of our ranks in order to weed out the supposed bad elements among us," Kabalu said. "Part of that is asking our regular troops to fill up forms, and getting their biodata. Maybe that was what the military meant."

He said "thousands" of MILF members had accomplished the forms.

Kabalu said the group also had an ongoing campaign involving the gathering of supporters, to "update the people on the status of the peace talks."

He said the MILF was likewise retraining its regular troops, but added that it was a "routine" exercise.

'Very rampant'

Adan had said his men was able to secure affidavits on the supposed recruitment "from the trainees themselves."

He said that MILF training was "very rampant" in Zamboanga Sibugay, and that a councilor of Zamboanga City reported to him last week that some residents were taken to Sacol Island for training.

Adan also accused the MILF of expanding its territories. He quoted a brigade commander as saying that cases of illegal land encroachment in South Cotabato had been increasing

But Kabalu said: "What's his basis for saying that? We did not build, nor are we building, new camps. The issue of digging foxholes in Polomolok in Cotabao has already been settled. A monitoring team went there and had the [MILF] post dismantled."

But even as he insisted that the secessionists were not engaged in recruitment, Kabalu said neither recruitment nor training of new members was in violation of any agreement between the MILF and the government.

CHRISTMAS JOY

Children from Malabon show the toys and other gifts they got for Christmas. Judging from the smile on their faces, they sure liked what they got.

ERIK ARAZAS

Abus don't have JI ideology, says KL

By Volt Contreras

THEY MAY BE REGARDED AS PARTNERS IN terrorism, but the Indonesia-based extremist network Jemaah Islamiyah does not exactly see the Philippine-based Abu Sayyaf Group as an ideological brother—but more of an armed band that "lacks discipline and more interested in committing crime."

This was how the Royal Malaysian Police painted the relationship between the JI and ASG, which are often pictured in the West as closely-linked warriors waging jihad in the region.

In a briefing last week with international journalists in Kuala Lumpur, the RMP top brass suggested that while the JI may have been aiding the ASG in terms of "training," the fraternity has been based more on muscle than on mission.

"Looks like there has been some training provided by the JI to the Abu Sayyaf, but then JI members have found that the Abu Sayyaf lacked discipline," said C. Pakianathan, chief of the RMP Special Branch division.

"They (ASG) were more interested in committing crime. They did not have a strong ideology although they portray themselves as a very serious organization," he added.

Pakianathan also said JI operatives had trained in Camp Abu Bakar, the former stronghold of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, until it was overrun by government troops during the Estrada administration.

"They are having problems, in fact, (with) no fixed training area now," he noted.

The officer reported, however, that while the MILF "leadership is not favorable to the JI anymore," the "old cooperation" still persists between their low-level members.

Also in the briefing, the RMP said Indonesia remains as JI's combat zone, with Jakarta and Bali as its prime targets.

But the Malaysian police said JI suicide bombers may already be changing their strategy to adjust to the tighter security environment by choosing "smaller targets with high psychological impact."

The JI launches suicide bombing missions using recruits who have "no adverse police records" to minimize the chance of detection, and who have surveyed the target location themselves."

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Erap shares 'noche buena' with ailing ma

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE BEING PLACED under house arrest after he was charged with plunder four years ago, former President Joseph Estrada share *noche buena* (Christmas Eve meal) with his 101-year-old mother at her house in San Juan, Metro Manila.

Estrada's political allies and friends again trooped to the house to pay their respects on Kennedy Street after Estrada arrived at about 7 p.m. Saturday.

The Sandiganbayan allowed Estrada, who is under house arrest at his Tanay rest house in Rizal, to spend Christmas and New Year with his mother Mary.

He was already preparing to leave the house as of 5:30 p.m. yesterday, the San Juan Police said. He was supposed to leave at 5 p.m. under the short liberty detailed by the order.

Estrada will also be allowed to leave Tanay at 5 p.m. on December 31 to spend New Year's Eve with his mother until 5 p.m. on January 1, 2006.

"He was very happy," Estrada's son and San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito said. He, however, added, "I feel sad every time I see his suffering especially during Christmas, when his activities are restricted, while the ones who are responsible for the country's misery are still lording it over."

Only last week, Estrada was also allowed to leave the rest house to attend the wake of his elder brother Antonio.

He went straight to his mother's house at about 7 p.m. on December 15, stayed at the wake for a few hours, slept at his mother's house, and went back to Tanay the following morning.

He told the INQUIRER at the time that he was glad to have seen his ailing mother.

Asked yesterday whether he had any Christmas message to impart, Estrada was content to make a call for every one to "pray that we will be able to overcome all the problems we are facing."

No virus from migratory birds

By Christian V. Esguerra

MIGRATORY BIRDS HAVE ARRIVED IN THE country and none of them has shown any sign of avian influenza.

However, an outbreak of the deadly virus could still be triggered by other sources.

It's winter in China, Japan and Korea and migratory birds trying to escape the unbearable cold there, have all landed in the Philippines, according to Mayor Jerry Pelayo of Candaba, Pampanga.

Since October, tests conducted on the birds by the Department of Agriculture have yielded negative results for any bird flu strain, said Pelayo, a key member of the National Anti-Avian Influenza Task Force.

"They've all arrived and none of them was found to be carrying the virus," he told the INQUIRER. "Personally, I feel we're already safe. We'll just wait for the birds to leave. But I'm not saying that we should let our guard down."

Pelayo was among the first to sound the alarm over the possible arrival of bird flu in the country. If ever the virus hit, he was afraid Candaba swamp could become "ground zero."

Officials earlier said an outbreak of the deadly H5NI strain would most likely come from migratory birds that usually arrive in the country in October and leave by February.

Any breakdown in port, customs or border security could allow the virus to sneak in via smuggled fowl.

Pelayo was clearly speaking of the 12-hectare Candaba swamp which is surrounded by eight barangays. He said the assessment was most likely true for the rest of the 25 wetlands in the country.

Mike Lu, president of the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines, agreed with the Candaba mayor, saying that a clean Candaba also meant the absence of infection for all other water birds or ducks.

That's because migratory birds would usually settle in the Pampanga swamp first before flying to other wetlands in the country, he said.

Lu added that Candaba was also vulnerable since the area was surrounded by local poultry. Infection was particularly easy among ducks because their feces were left in the water.

He said there were at least 60 wetlands but Agriculture officials counted only 25 for the national anti-bird flu campaign.

Another factor working in favor of the country are the "natural barriers" formed by the waters separating China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, according to Lu.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PNP reshuffle triggers jockeying for position

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE JOCKEYING FOR MAJOR POSTS IN the Philippine National Police force is on as a reshuffle in three offices took effect on Tuesday, officials privy to the jockeying said.

Police Director Reynaldo Varilla was made head of the Directorate for Intelligence in a simple ceremony in Camp Crame. Chief Supt. Emmanuel Carta was appointed chief of the Police Community Relations Group, while Chief Supt. Antonio Billones was made head of the Directorate for Operations.

Billones used to head community relations and Carta, operations. They simply swapped places.

Meanwhile, Chief Supt. Jose Salvacion, former senior assistant to Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, now heads the Human Resource and Doctrine Development (HRDD) office, the post formerly held by Varilla.

In Central Luzon, two senior police officials were eyeing the leadership of the regional police office, according to officers familiar with the power play.

The officials asked not to be named so as not to jeopardize their relationships with the officers involved and because they could be part of the selection process.

Canceled appointment

Sources told the INQUIRER that Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, head of the Intelligence Group, was supposed to assume command of the Central Luzon or Region III Police on Saturday.

But Director General Arturo Lomibao called from Australia to cancel the turnover ceremony, one source said, adding that Rafanan was told about it one-and-half hours before he was to assume the post.

Sources said last-minute jockeying by Salvacion had prompted the cancellation of Rafanan's appointment.

"That's not true," Salvacion told the INQUIRER although he confirmed he had wanted to become chief of the Region III Police force.

He said Reyes had recommended him to President Macapagal-Arroyo to replace Chief Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, current police chief of Region III.

But Salvacion said he gave way when he learned the top brass had intended to give the post to Rafanan, his senior at the Philippine Military Academy. Rafanan is a member of PMA Class '75, Salvacion of Class '76.

"I'll be a hypocrite if I say I did not want it. It's a coveted post, but I already abandoned my ambition. I'm now with HRDD," he said.

Rafanan confirmed he had received his release orders from the Intelligence Group a week earlier. Asked about the reshuffle, he would only say that the matter was up to the PNP brass to decide.

"Rafanan feels bad about it. His relatives were already on their way to the ceremony when a senior official said it had been canceled," another official said.

Not the first time

"But the post will still go to him, most likely after Christmas. What I know is that Lapinid also wants to stay until Christmas because he has commitments until the end of the year," the official said.

This was not the first time that appointments had been canceled at the last minute. The Armed Forces Board of Generals had recommended Lt. Gen. Samuel Bagasin to head the Armed Forces Southern Command, but Ms Arroyo instead appointed Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan, stirring a controversy in the military.

Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga's appointment as chief of the Philippine Navy was also canceled at the last minute and delayed for several days. But he eventually got the post.

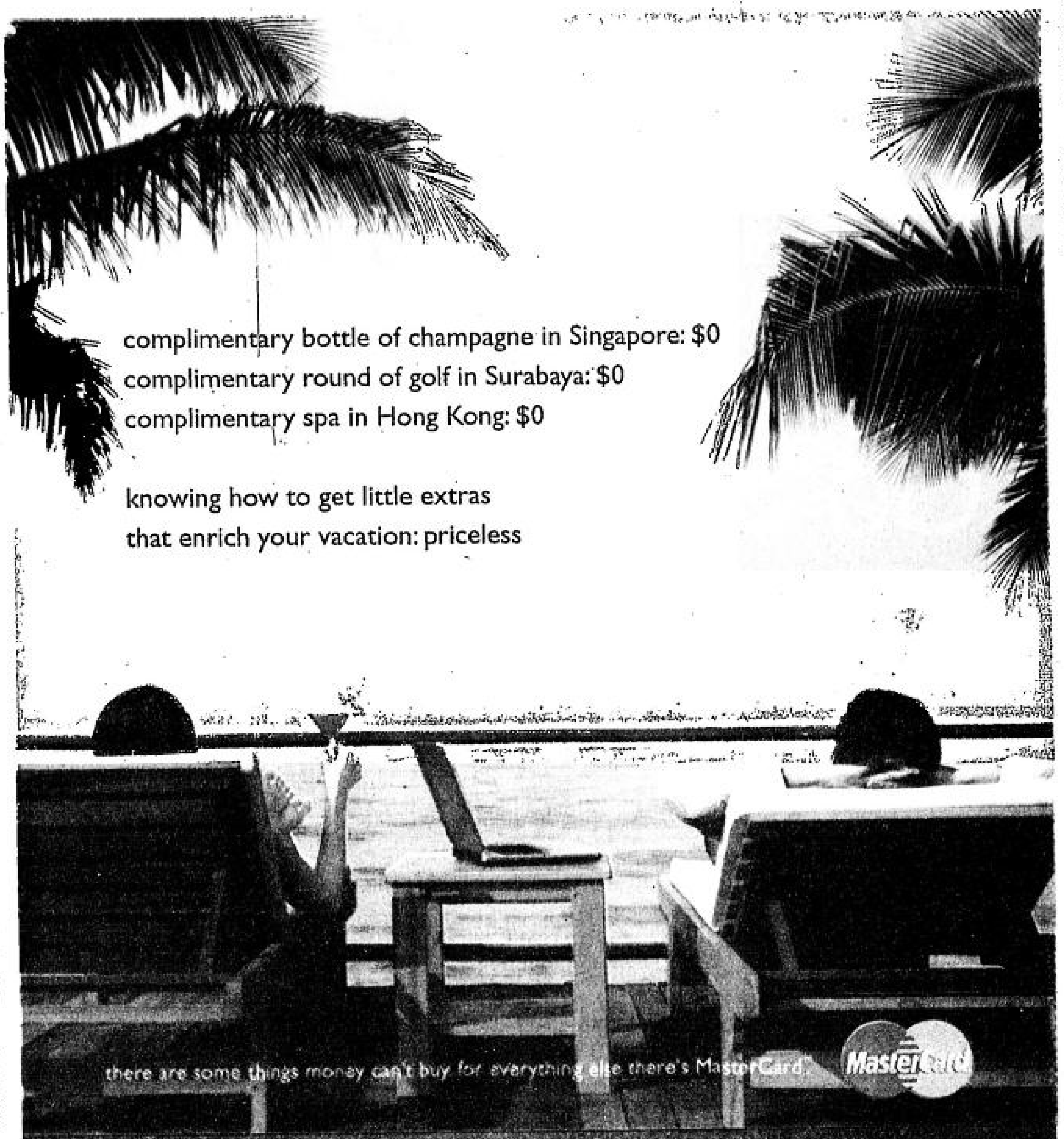
The official said the PNP brass decided to place Salvacion in HRDD to find a way to bring Rafanan to Region III.

"The PNP chief had said he would resolve the issue when he got back (from Australia)," said the official.

Another influential unit still without a head is the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Two names have cropped up as possible replacements to retired Chief Supt. Ricardo Dapat—Region IV-A head Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza and Central Police District head Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan.

Dapat officially left the police force on Saturday.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Peso remains competitive vs other currencies—BSP

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO REMAINS competitive vis-a-vis other currencies in the region despite being stronger, rallying by over 5 percent against the US dollar since the start of the year, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said

The peso closed Friday at 53.27:$1 from Thursday's 53.25:$1 but currency traders said fundamentals still favored the local currency.

Now trading at nearly three-year highs, the local currency opened at a high of 53.18 but gave up some gains and closed near the day's low at 53.27:$1.

Trading volume at the Philippine Dealing System was thin at $106.54 million ahead of the long Christmas holiday break.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco said a strong peso benefited the country more than it spawned negative effects.

"The exchange rate is only one of the factors that affect export competitiveness. There are other factors like wages, energy and infrastructure costs," Tetangco said.

"Compared to other currencies in the region like the Thai baht, while the differential against the peso has narrowed recently (as the peso slightly caught up), compared to the exchange rate a few years back, the differential has gone up," he said.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said the adverse impact of a strong peso on external competitiveness was softened by the extent of inflation.

"While the peso has been quite strong, the inflation rate has started to ease. When nominal exchange rate appreciates, you tend to lose competitiveness. But now that inflation has slowed down, that's the mitigating factor to the continuing strength of the peso," he said.

The BSP officials said the peso's strong ascent in recent days was partly due to seasonal factors, as the increase in inflows from overseas Filipino workers in December and strong portfolio investments.

Correction

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a Metro story on Page A15—"Street children treated to day of fun"—misstated the name of a foundation. The correct name of the foundation is the Laura Vicuña—not Vicu—Foundation.

* * *

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Fr. Robert: Revamped, not banished

By Christian V. Esguerra

MAVERICK PRIEST FR. ROBERT REYES WAS not banished from his parish, nor was he asked to leave because of his active involvement in political affairs, the Diocese of Cubao clarified.

Fr. Aris Sison, the diocese's spokesperson, said on Friday Reyes requested for a sabbatical when consulted about an upcoming reshuffle of assignments.

"He was not banished," Sison told the INQUIRER. "It was part of a general reshuffle that would affect all parish priests under the diocese. In his case, he opted to take a sabbatical."

He said people should not make an issue of Reyes' sabbatical or assume it was because he was a vocal critic of both the government and the local Catholic hierarchy.

The INQUIRER earlier reported that Reyes had been asked to leave the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Project 4, Quezon City effective Jan. 15, 2006. This is the second time in two years that he has had to move out of a parish.

Sison explained that the decision to reorganize the Cubao diocese was the "fruit of a long process of discernment and consultation" among all parish priests, including Reyes.

He said it took diocesan officials one year to map out the plan.

Sabbatical

Sison added that Reyes was asked if he wanted to continue with his "advocacies" or go on sabbatical, a regular vacation given to priests. "He chose to go on sabbatical. If not, he would be given another parish.

He said that there was no issue in assigning Reyes to a "less prominent" parish. In 2003, Reyes was transferred from the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice in UP Diliman to the lesser known parish in Project 4.

Sison said he himself would be moving next summer from the Sta. Maria della Strada Parish located beside the posh La Vista Subdivision along Katipunan Avenue to the Heart of Jesus and Mary Parish in West Triangle, Quezon City.

Vow of obedience

"I have no problem with that," he said. "It's part of our job as priests. We should not take it as a punishment or demotion. We have a vow of obedience."

Sison said the sweeping reorganization of the young Cubao diocese would take effect in three stages next year.

The first one will be implemented on Jan. 15 which would have included Reyes. The second one is set after Holy Week and the last one in June.

But Reyes, ostensibly affected by the decision, packed up as soon as he learned about it early this month.

"I don't know why he left so soon," Sison said.

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GMA shelves eviction of press

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS DECIDED to shelve for the meantime her plan to ship out the Malacañang beat reporters to the New Executive Building outside the Palace gates after finding out for herself that the new site was inaccessible.

"I've decided to hold the transfer of the Malacañang Press Corps office from the Kalayaan Hall to the NEB until we have improved the area's accessibility," President Arroyo said in an ambush interview after Malacañang's annual gift giving event. "Access is really the biggest problem."

The President had ordered the transfer of the beat reporters to the NEB before the end of this year to complete the multimillion-peso restoration of Kalayaan Hall into a museum.

The President came to her decision after she did a simulation of the walking distance from the Kalayaan Hall to the NEB. The President walked with Lilia Tolentino, the most senior reporter in the Malacañang beat, to the NEB and it took them 20 minutes to reach the supposed express route between the NEB and the Palace.

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Ex-Senator Barbers dies

From page A1

cancer at 61.

Members of his family and his staff said Barbers died at 10:29 a.m. on Christmas Day at the Medical City hospital in Pasig City, with his wife Virginia and their children—Robert Lyndon, Robert Ace, Robert Dean and Mary Grace—at his bedside.

Dean Barbers, a former Makati City councilor and now president and chief executive officer of the Philippine Tourism Authority, said his father was a fighter.

"He fought to his last breath," said the youngest of the three sons, recalling how Barbers was rushed to the hospital at about 6 a.m. on Christmas Eve complaining of difficulty in breathing.

A staff member said Barbers was brought to the hospital on Wednesday night for a checkup, which had supposedly become part of his routine following surgery in the United States in November 2000.

Barbers was confined at Medical City about two weeks ago, during which time he refused to accept visitors other than members of his immediate family. He was discharged a week later.

"He didn't want us to see him that way," said a staff member. "He didn't want anybody to see him in a very bad condition."

'Work to do'

It was in July that Barbers last left for the United States for a checkup.

A staff member who saw him off at the airport recalled him as saying: "Be prepared. Upon my return, we have work to do."

The staff member, who had been with Barbers since he was interior secretary under then President Fidel V. Ramos, said she took it to mean that her boss was awaiting reappointment as interior secretary to replace the incumbent, Angelo Reyes.

The talk is that Reyes is to be removed from the Department of the Interior and Local Governments and appointed ambassador because of strong opposition to his confirmation at the Commission on Appointments.

'Faithful service'

In a statement issued by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed sadness over Barbers' passing.

"We are deeply saddened by the death of Senator Barbers especially since it comes during this festive season," she said, adding:

"We hope his family will take comfort in knowing that he has now found true peace and rest with the Lord."

Ms Arroyo also said Barbers had served the country "faithfully" and that he would be "remembered fondly."

"His sons in public service will surely see to it that his legacy lives on," she said.

Dean Barbers told the INQUIRER that his father's greatest legacy was an "undying love for his country."

"He served the country and its people to the best of his abilities ... as a police officer, senator and father," Dean said.

Paraphrasing his father's motto, Ace Barbers, representative of the second district of Surigao del Norte and stalwart of the ruling Lakas-CMD, said: "There is no greater achievement than to offer oneself in the service of God, country and people."

Dean described his father as a "very kind father" who spent time with his children and grandchildren despite his hectic schedule.

Some of Barbers' staff members said they were preparing to visit him on Jan. 19, his birthday, and also expecting his appointment to the DILG.

"He was very kind to us. That's why we are very loyal to him," one of them said. "He was like a father to many of us."

Election protest

Barbers ran for reelection as senator in 2004 under the Lakas slate, but lost.

He filed an election protest against Sen. Rodolfo Biazon to contest the 12th slot, accusing the Commission on Elections of haste in proclaiming the latter's victory and demanding that the poll body await the election results in his strongholds in Mindanao.

But his petition was denied.

Barbers' name was also mentioned in the controversial "Hello Garci" tapes.

Transcripts of the tapes showed Barbers purportedly calling then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to ensure his victory in the 2004 elections.

Barbers spent 27 years as a police officer before he entered politics, first as a representative of his district in Surigao del Norte.

He started in 1962 as a patrolman in Manila, where he spent his entire career as a police officer.

He was appointed head of the National Bureau of Investigation, during which he was credited with the arrest of suspected drug lord Jose "Don Pepe" Oyson in the 1980s.

Oyson was killed by NBI agents inside a car that was to bring him to a court hearing. He was believed executed.

Barbers was also credited with the arrest of then military rebel Billy Bibit and communist leader Ignacio Capegsan, for which he was promoted.

A movie on Barbers' exploits as a policeman, "Bobby Barbers—Parak," helped catapult him to national fame, which was a key factor in his winning a Senate seat.

Crime fighter

In 1996, Barbers' second term as congressman was cut short when he was picked by Ramos to head the DILG.

Barbers used his experience in the police force to the hilt at the DILG, further increasing his popularity as a tough crime fighter.

In 1998, when he first ran for senator, he landed fifth and became the only police officer to rise to the rank of senator.

At the Senate, Barbers authored the law creating the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

He was instrumental in the crafting of other laws that increased penalties for "jueteng" protectors and operators and strengthened the antidrugs campaign, such as including possession of 10 grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu) as a nonbailable offense.

He was a strong advocate of the death penalty for capital offenders.

'Man of courage'

In a stament, Speaker Jose de Venecia described Barbers as "a man of courage best remembered as one of the greatest crime fighters" in the country and in Southeast Asia.

He said Barbers was easily "the most popular and effective member" of the Ramos Cabinet.

Barbers was twice considered for the position of vice president in the ticket of then presidential candidate De Venecia in 1998, and again in 2001 on the slate of Ms Arroyo.

"Senator Barbers was a man of self-sacrificing humility," said De Venecia, who had appealed to Barbers on those two occasions to withdraw from contention.

"I appealed to him to give way to GMA as my running mate in 1998—and he agreed although he had been virtually endorsed by the Lakas convention to be my vice-presidential candidate," De Venecia said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

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Unite against terror ...

From page A1

new world order based on just ethical and economic relationships," he said, speaking in Italian.

The address by the leader of the world's some 1.1 billion Roman Catholics was different in style than those of his predecessor John Paul II who died in April.

John Paul wrote his Christmas addresses in free-style verse and resembled poetry, whereas Benedict's was in prose like a normal homily or speech.

Technology not a God

Since his election, the Pope has repeatedly reminded Catholics not to give in to an "ethical relativism" where circumstances can be used to justify actions that should be considered wrong in all cases.

The Pope, wearing a gold cape and with a gold miter, pursued that line in his Sunday address by beaming in on the dangers of technology, implying that it should not be allowed to become God in its own right.

"Today we can dispose of vast material resources. But the men and women in our technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart," he said.

"That is why it is so important for us to open our minds and hearts to the birth of Christ, this event of salvation which can give new hope to the life of each human being," Benedict said.

In other parts of the address, he appealed for respect for the rights of people suffering a humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan.

He made another appeal for peace in the Holy Land and called for "actions inspired by fairness and wisdom" in Iraq and Lebanon.

The Pope asked God to favor dialogue on the Korean peninsula so that "dangerous disputes" there and elsewhere in Asia could be solved peacefully.

Christmas Eve Mass

The Sunday Urbi et Orbi followed a solemn Christmas Eve Mass attended by a congregation that packed St. Peter's Basilica.

In his homily at that Mass, Benedict urged the world's Catholics to be beacons of peace in a troubled world and offered a special prayer for an end to strife in the Holy Land.

"Where there is love, light shines forth in the world; where there is hatred, the world remains in darkness," he told pilgrims and tourists who had flocked from around the world to attend his first Christmas as Pope.

Those who did not manage to obtain tickets, which were distributed free, watched the Pope in the cold night air on giant screens in the square outside Christendom's largest church.

"The light of Bethlehem has never been extinguished. In every age, it has touched men and women, it has shone around them," said Benedict.

Some 30 cardinals, who were among those who elected Benedict in April, joined him at the great basilica's main altar for the celebration that was televised live to 46 countries and followed by tens of millions of people on television and radio.

Benedict recounted the story of Christ's birth in a stable in Bethlehem and asked Catholics not to forget that the true meaning of Christmas was the "inner light" radiating from the Child Jesus.

"Let us keep this light-giving flame from being extinguished by the cold winds of our time!" he said.

Peacemakers

Benedict urged his listeners to help end conflicts and misunderstandings wherever they were found.

"Let us strive to be active heralds of His peace in the world of today," he said.

"Christ gives himself to us and, in doing so, gives us his peace. He gives it to us so that we can carry the light of peace within and give it to others. He gives it to us so that we can become peacemakers and builders of peace in the world."

The Pope, who has been invited to visit both Israel and Palestinian territories, made a special appeal for peace in the Holy Land.

"On this night, when we look toward Bethlehem, let us pray in a special way for the birthplace of our Redeemer and for the men and women who live and suffer there," he said.

"We wish to pray for peace in the Holy Land: Look, O Lord, upon this corner of the earth, Your homeland, which is so very dear to you! Let your light shine upon it! Let it know peace!"

The next major event on the Pope's Christmas season calendar is a Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6. Two days later, he will baptize children.

In early January, the Pope is due to publish his first encyclical, a major writing addressed to all Church members.

The encyclical, believed to be called "God is Love," deals with the individual's personal relationship with God. *Reuters*

Rosales: Now is time to change

From page A1

thing as a "laboratory condition" wherein the situation would be deemed "clean" enough to welcome Christ.

Rosales took the occasion to spread his message of optimism amid the unresolved political crisis and the expected increase in fuel costs, power rates and prices of basic commodities early next year.

He has consistently taken an optimistic perspective, urging the faithful to turn their attention to the plight of the poor.

Rosales said the act of changing oneself should not be deferred until both the government and the governed were "clean" and everyone was "sinless."

"Jesus comes because we need Him, not because we deserve Him, not because we are prepared," Rosales said, drawing from biblical instances when Christ was believed to have descended from heaven to guide His flock on earth.

Poverty

"If we follow the ways of Christ, then it is clear that the righteousness that Jesus thought, the enlightenment that He shared, the love that He dispensed, would come even when we [are not deserving]," the archbishop said.

Rosales said poverty was much worse now than it was before: "Just look around you and you'll see it everywhere."

His primary means of addressing the problem of poverty is "Pondo ng Pinoy," a project encouraging the public to think and act for the poor.

The recommended concrete start is to set aside at least 25 centavos daily to form a hefty fund for feeding programs and livelihood projects.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Christmas Day in tsunami zone tinged with sadness

From page A1

ground, as backhoes picked them up and dropped them into 10-meter deep pits. The stench of dead bodies could be detected a kilometer up the road.

These days, grass and flowers cover what was once churned up mud, and birds sing in the trees behind the field. Three stilted huts provide shelter for the streams of families that make the pilgrimage.

Most of the mourners that visit the graves read traditional verses from the Koran, Islam's holy book. They also pour water on the ground and sprinkle petals—local Indonesian traditions that predate Islam's arrival to the country.

On Sunday, an Indonesian-Chinese Buddhist family also prayed at the site, burning incense and piles of fake money in accordance with Chinese tradition. The family attracted curious looks from other mourners, many of whom had never seen such rites performed before.

Singing carols

In Thailand, Christian missionaries went house to rebuilt house in Na Khem village on Christmas Eve singing carols and handing out practical household gifts, such as washing tubs, ironing boards and umbrellas.

"Still today, one year after, you meet people and they're still suffering almost like the first week," Elke Hain, 41, a German missionary who has lived in Thailand for six years. "They have tears in their eyes when they tell you their stories ... They can't sleep, they have anxiety attacks."

Groups helping foreign families said the Christmas period would be especially tough.

"For people who lose someone, the first year is always the hardest. You go through it all alone," said Knut E. Pedersen, who is helping Norwegian survivors and relatives in Thailand.

Sigi and Silvia Gsteu of Feldkirch, Austria, returned to Thailand to honor a promise made to friends who died in the tsunami.

A year ago, Silvia Gsteu was recalled from vacation by work. She and Sigi vowed to make it up to the traveling companions they had left behind by returning this year and baking a special apple strudel for a Christmas feast.

The tsunami swamped the bungalows where friends of the Gsteu couple were staying, killing three of them. "Many people said to us, the best help you can give is to come back for holidays," Sigi said. "But we will not stay on the sea."

At one Christmas Eve Mass in a hotel along Patong beach, the priest urged attendees to "remember all those who lost their lives in the tsunami." Outside, revelers partied with bar staff dressed in Christmas hats in the beach's notorious nightclub district.

March by children

In India, more than 300 people attended an interfaith service of Hindu, Christian and Muslim prayers on Sunday before joining a march led by children dressed in white through Nagapattinam, where thousands were washed away.

"Our purpose is to express solidarity with the survivors and pledge ourselves to rebuild Nagapattinam," said S. P. Rajendran, secretary of the town's Chamber of Commerce and an organizer of the march.

On the anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami that left at least 216,000 people dead or missing, survivors and officials are taking stock of the relief operation and peace drives in Sri Lanka and Aceh, the two hardest hit places. Success has been mixed.

In Aceh, the tsunami resulted in a ceasefire between the government and guerillas that has ended a decades-old separatist conflict.

No such progress was made in Sri Lanka, where disputes over tsunami aid and an upsurge in violence have dashed hopes for an end to the country's long-running civil conflict.

Exactly one year ago on Monday, a massive magnitude-9 earthquake ripped apart the ocean floor off Sumatra island, sending giant waves crashing into the coastlines of one dozen countries from Malaysia to east Africa.

The United Nations estimated the death toll at 223,000. Many bodies, however, were lost at sea and in some cases the populations of places struck were not accurately recorded.

Rebuilding, funded by massive aid donations, has started but many refugee camps remain full and many agencies worry that the pace of reconstruction is too slow.

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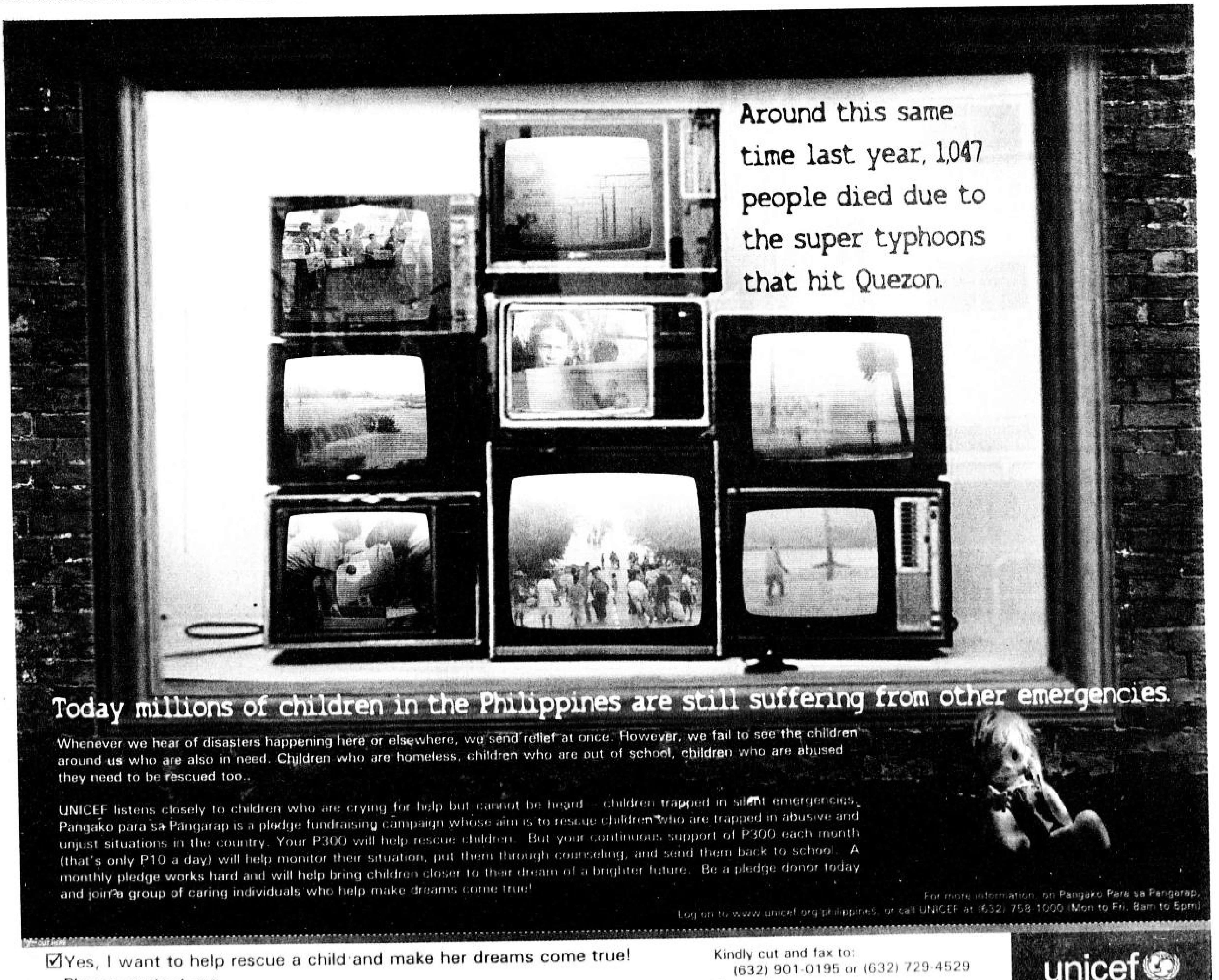
Around this same time last year, 1,047 people died due to the super typhoons that hit Quezon.

Today millions of children in the Philippines are still suffering from other emergencies.

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Christians pray for peace

Pilgrims pack Bethlehem again

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK—CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD celebrated Christmas with prayers for peace Sunday amid fears of violence as pilgrims returned in droves to their savior's birthplace.

Thousands of pilgrims descended on Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus Christ enjoyed its busiest Christmas of the new century.

The holy land was "thirsting for peace," the top Roman Catholic official in Jerusalem said in his annual Christmas sermon in Bethlehem Sunday and urged political leaders to create life rather than death.

"God created you not to fear or to kill each other but to love each other, to build and to cooperate together," Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah told worshippers including Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, a Muslim, at the Church of the Nativity.

"To our political leaders, who by their policy can decide for the life or the death of so many in this land we say: Be builders of life, not of death. Our Holy Land thirsts to recover its peace and holiness," he said.

Until this year, Christmas celebrations had been muted because of the Palestinian uprising which began in 2000. But a 10-month-old ceasefire has encouraged a big increase in the number of pilgrims and tourists to the town where Christians believe Jesus was born.

"Things are a bit better than in previous years. All the hotels are booked solid with pilgrims who came to celebrate Christmas," said Mariam Azizeh, 47, manager of the tourist office.

Israel's Army has eased restrictions on visitors to allow visits by foreigners as well as Palestinian Christians from the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli Christians are also expected in Bethlehem.

Pilgrims taking the road from nearby Jerusalem—the likely path taken by Mary and Joseph in the Christian narrative—cannot miss the biggest change to Bethlehem this year: The completion of an eight meter (26 foot)-high concrete wall.

"This wall must not exist. One day it will not exist," Sabbah, Pope Benedict's representative in the Holy Land, told reporters after he passed through the military crossing into Bethlehem.

"The Palestinian people should regain their liberty and land with a state and a capital and the Israeli people should have security," said Sabbah.

Israel erected its barrier inside the West Bank with the avowed aim of stopping Palestinian suicide bombers. While many sections near Jerusalem are concrete walls, most of the barrier is fencing with electronic sensors.

Palestinians say it is a land grab that denies them a viable state. The World Court has branded the barrier illegal because it loops into occupied land.

Palestinians said they were determined to brighten up the city more for Christmas than in recent years, setting up a huge tree and strings of lights. Lines of Palestinian flags fluttered alongside.

Hundreds queued in the rain to wait for midnight Mass at the compound of the Nativity Church, revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus.

"This Christmas we are defying the wall, the occupation and the continued Israeli raids into the town," said Bethlehem Gov. Salah al-Ta'mari.

In the battle-scarred Iraqi capital Baghdad, minority Christians celebrated the midnight Mass several hours before dusk because of a night curfew and the danger of being out late at night.

Iraqi national television broadcast live part of the ceremony led by the patriarch of Babylon and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, Emmanuel III Delly.

"I do not want to make a distinction between Christians and Muslims, we are all Iraqis. A car bomb kills without distinguishing between Christians and Muslims," Delly said before the Mass.

Christians account for about three percent of Iraq's population, but many have left the country in recent years, fearing the growth of Islamist militancy.

THE PROCESSION cross seen with the Nativity Church during the traditional procession to Manger Square Dec. 24 prior to the traditional Christmas midnight Mass in the biblical West Bank city of Bethlehem, where Christian tradition says the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus over 2,000 years ago. AFP

US troops enjoyed the rare experience of being waited upon by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who donned a white chef's hat to serve a sumptuous Christmas dinner at a base in the northern city of Mosul.

"What can I get you?" he asked the soldiers who had a choice of lobster, steak or crab and lined up for photographs with the secretary.

Christians in Asia too were reminded of how the world remains a dangerous place, with Indonesian bomb squads scouring churches amid fears of a repeat of Christmas Eve bombings by extremists five years ago which claimed 19 lives.

Indonesians were warned to beware of bombs possibly gift-wrapped and left in public places, with anxieties heightened over possible revenge attacks for last month's killing of Malaysian bomb-maker Azahari Husin, a key member of the Jemaah Islamiyah extremist network.

In Sri Lanka, unidentified gunmen shot dead a Tamil legislator and wounded eight others during a Catholic Christmas Mass in the embattled eastern province of Batticaloa, police said. *AFP, Reuters*

Christmas popular in China despite restrictions

BEIJING—MILLIONS OF PEOPLE CELEBRATed Christmas in China Sunday as the holiday becomes increasingly popular, both commercially and religiously, despite government attempts to limit the spread of Christianity.

State-approved churches in Beijing reported bigger crowds than previous years, with many worshippers and others packed against the aisles or standing outside churches watching services on TV monitors.

"It's mainly because people are facing increasing pressures in life. They want to find something that brings them peace and balance," a nun surnamed Yu at the Nantang Catholic church in Beijing said.

A Beijing TV station journalist, Zhang Li, said 10,000 to 20,000 people thronged the Xishiku Catholic church in Beijing which he went to on Christmas Eve.

He is among the growing number of people in China who are turning to religion for spiritual support in life.

"I'm not a Christian but I've been going to church on Christmas Eve for the past seven years," Zhang said.

"I want to feel the Christmas atmosphere. I go there to pray for peace and good health for my family."

Throughout Chinese cities, hotels, restaurants and other businesses are also seizing on the holiday to try to boost earnings.

Christmas trees and lights now decorate shopping malls, restaurants and office buildings, with images of Santa more common than images of the country's most famous modern leader, the late Mao Zedong, in many parts of cities.

According to a recent survey, 90 percent of 2,000 people surveyed said they had celebration plans on Christmas Eve, Saturday's China Daily reported.

Bars and karaoke halls were packed with customers for a night of revelry on Christmas Eve, as 43 percent of respondents planned to celebrate, according to the survey conducted by the Social Survey Institute of China in 14 big cities.

Gift-giving during this holiday is also becoming more common. Stores saw a surge in pre-Christmas spending, with many in Beijing extending their closing time on Christmas Eve, Xinhua news agency said.

While the government sees the benefits of Christmas in boosting consumer spending, it is wary of the spread of Christianity, or any religion, for fear such a trend could rival its authority.

This year, the government continued to arrest priests and other religious officials and raid China's "underground churches" which are not registered with the government and refuse to submit to government monitoring and meddling. *AFP*

Poor weather gives whales Christmas break

SYDNEY—GREENPEACE PROTESTERS SPENT Christmas riding out a force 10 gale in the icy Southern Ocean and consoling themselves with the thought that the foul weather was preventing Japanese whalers from adding to their kill, the group's team leader said Sunday.

The Japanese whalers and two Greenpeace ships have been playing cat and mouse in Antarctic waters for almost a week but were now simply intent on riding out the storm, campaign leader Shane Rattenbury told AFP by satellite phone from onboard the Arctic Sunrise.

"We're having a rough day," he said. "We're in the middle of a force 10 storm with wind gusts of 55 knots.

"You could say it's a good Christmas in the sense that there's no whaling going on today, it's a bit of a Christmas present for the whales."

Rattenbury said feelings were mixed among the crews of the two Greenpeace boats, the Esperanza and Arctic Sunrise.

"Obviously people are missing their family and friends but there's also a sense that we're doing something out here that's making a difference and saving the whales," he said.

"We had a few Christmas beers last night and now we're quietly riding out the storm."

Earlier, another protest ship, the Sea Shepherd's Farley Mowat, reported it almost collided with one of the Japanese vessels. *AFP*

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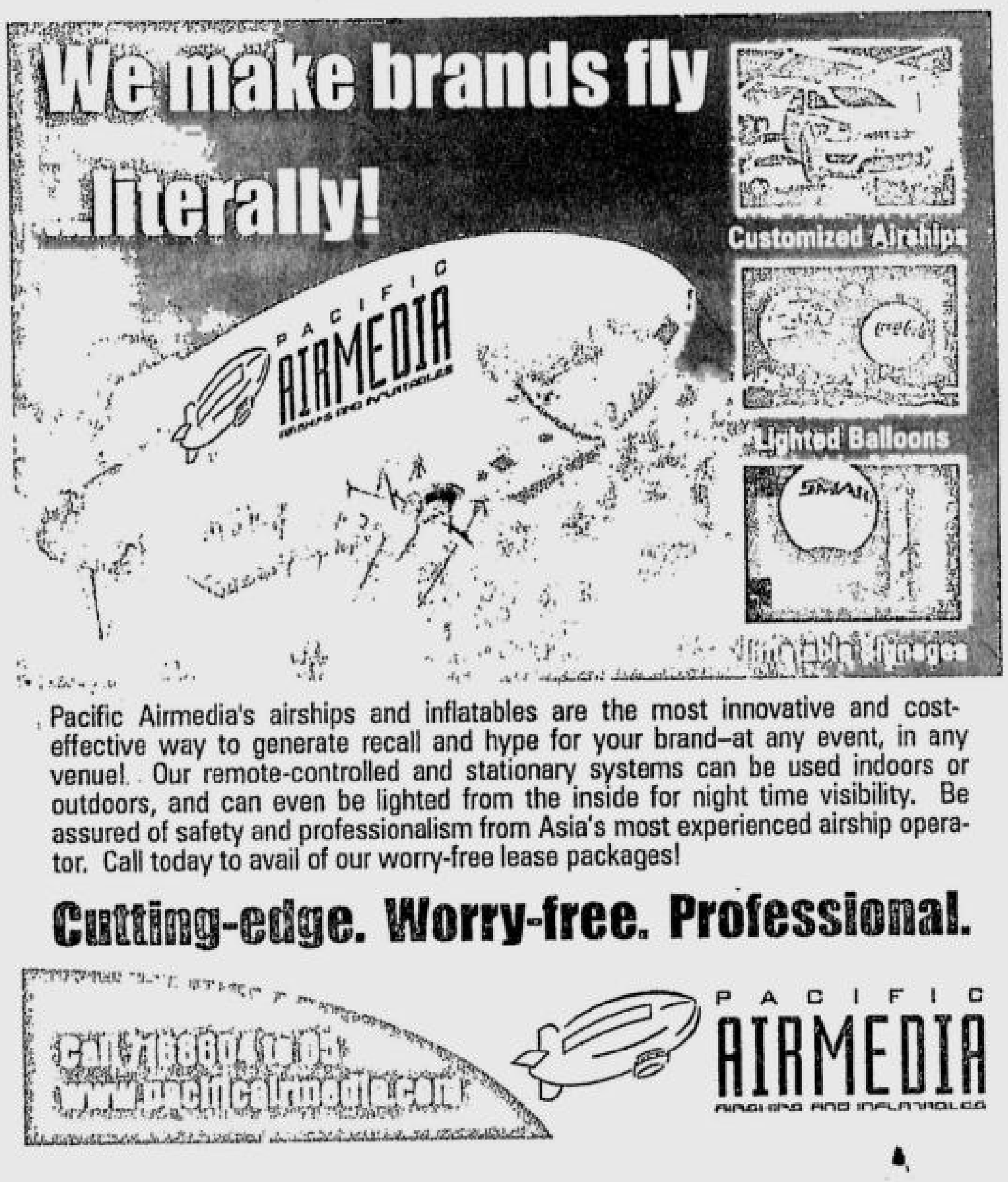

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Spying on Americans broader than reported

BUSH

WASHINGTON—THE US GOVernment's domestic spying operation is much broader than previously disclosed, involving eavesdropping on vast amounts of telephone and Internet traffic, according to US media reports.

The government's top-secret National Security Agency (NSA) is not only monitoring specific conversations of terrorist suspects but also combing through massive volumes of phone and Internet communications, according to a New York Times report.

The "data-mining operation" by the NSA—often in cooperation with major telecommunications firms—includes surveillance of phone calls outside the United States that pass through US-based telephone "switches" or gateways.

The revelations raise more legal questions about President George W. Bush's conduct in the "war on terror" and are sure to fuel a growing debate about civil liberties and national security in the United States.

US media also reported that the government runs a secret program to monitor homes, workplaces and mosques of Muslims in six US cities for signs of possible nuclear radiation.

Both programs involve surveillance without search warrants or court orders, and agents who questioned the legality of the practice were allegedly rebuked, according to the news magazine US News and World Report.

The federal government had previously said it had installed radiation-detection equipment at ports, subway stations and other public sites. The reports revealed that surveillance of private property was also under way.

Warning that constitutional rights were under threat, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) condemned the monitoring of the Muslim community without court approval as illegal and discriminatory.

"All Americans should be concerned about the apparent trend toward a two-tiered system of justice, with full rights for most citizens, and another diminished set of rights for Muslims," the council said in a statement issued Friday.

The disclosures came a week after Bush acknowledged that he had approved eavesdropping on US citizens without court-ordered warrants, as the White House came under increasing scrutiny about the legal limits of its "war on terror."

Bush and his top aides have stressed that the order for eavesdropping was limited to those suspected of ties to al-Qaida. But the latest reports about vetting vast amounts of data indicate the spying operation is more far-reaching.

Bush has vehemently defended the spying as a "vital tool" to fending off another terrorist strike but some of his Republican allies in Congress have expressed concern about the eavesdropping. The debate is sure to intensify when the Senate Judiciary Committee takes up the issue in the new year.

In its effort to track terrorist threats, the Bush administration has secured groundbreaking cooperation from major telecommunications companies, which have passed along information on calling patterns from a large volume of telephone traffic to the NSA, according to US media reports. *AFP*

Key events of 2005

(Continued from yesterday)

November

US President George W. Bush gets a hostile reception on a trip to Latin America to push a free trade deal.

Pakistan and India open their tightly guarded frontier in Kashmir for earthquake relief.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair suffers his first parliamentary defeat, over a plan to let police hold terrorism suspects for up to 90 days without trial.

Suicide attacks kill at least 57 people at hotels in the Jordanian capital Amman.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wins elections in Liberia to become Africa's first elected woman head of state.

US President George W. Bush visits South Korea for an Asia-Pacific summit, and then travels to China.

The US House of Representatives rejects a resolution demanding the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon splits from his Likud party and seeks a dissolution of parliament.

Angela Merkel is finally appointed Germany's first woman chancellor.

A chemical blast causes massive pollution near Harbin, one of China's biggest cities.

A border post between the Gaza Strip and Egypt is opened for the first time under Palestinian control.

Some 150 people are killed in one of a series of deadly mine accidents in China.

The White House unveils what it describes as a "strategy for victory" in Iraq, where more westerners are taken hostage—and the violence continues.

December

On World AIDS day the United Nations warns that a record 40 million people worldwide are infected either with the disease or the virus that causes it.

The United States carries out the 1,000th execution since capital punishment was reinstated in 1976.

The US Defense Department admits that it is planting positive news items in Iraqi media.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice tries to counter reports that the CIA shuttles secret prisoners around the world and tortures them, sometimes in Europe.

Violence heats up in Sri Lanka, with seven government soldiers killed by Tamil rebels.

A top war crimes suspect from the wars that broke up the former Yugoslavia, Croatian general Ante Gotovina, is arrested in Spain. But two top Serbs remain at large.

The United States comes under fresh pressure at climate talks in Montreal.

In Nigeria, 71 children from a single school are among the 107 dead in a plane crash. In Iran, a crash kills 108 people when a plane carrying journalists hits a building.

Iraqis vote in parliamentary elections, as the US talks of bringing some troops home. After a lull during the voting, the violence resumes.

Violence also begins rising again in the Middle East conflict. The Palestinians prepare for elections in January.

The World Trade Organization reaches a new agreement at a summit in Hong Kong, but poor countries say they have again been sacrificed to the rich.

US President George W. Bush comes under fire for authorizing surveillance of American citizens without seeking a court order.

Also in the United States, conservative Christians are up in arms at the continuing desacralization of their religion's most important festival, with many people wishing one another a "Happy Holiday" rather than a "Merry Christmas." *AFP*

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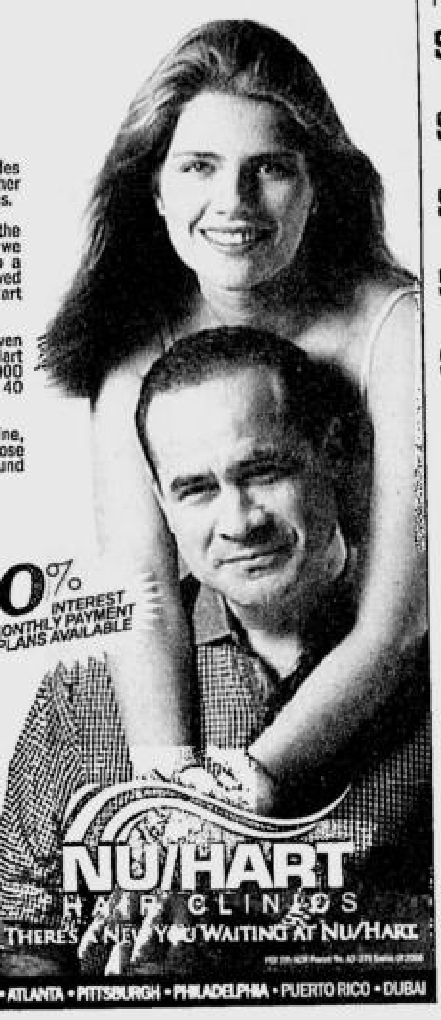

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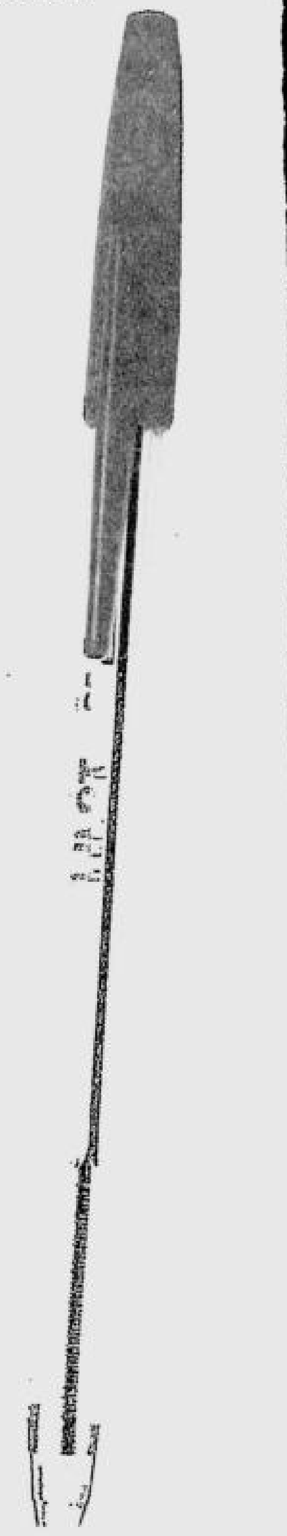

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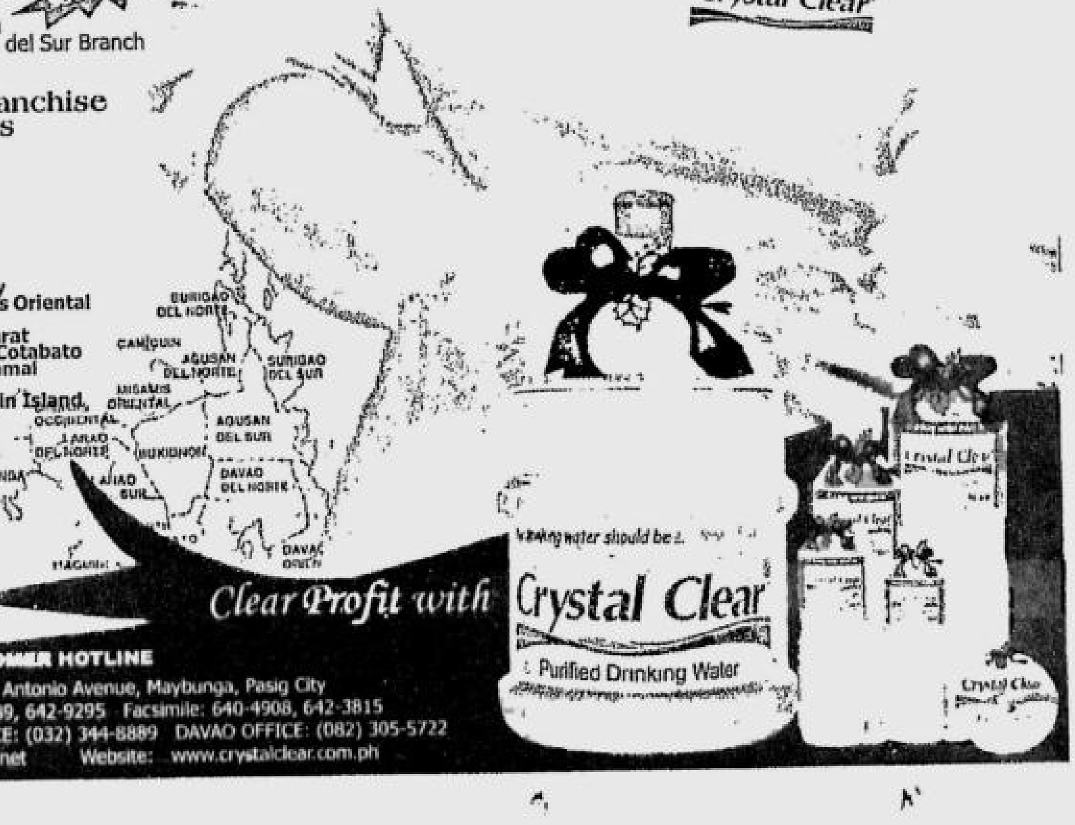

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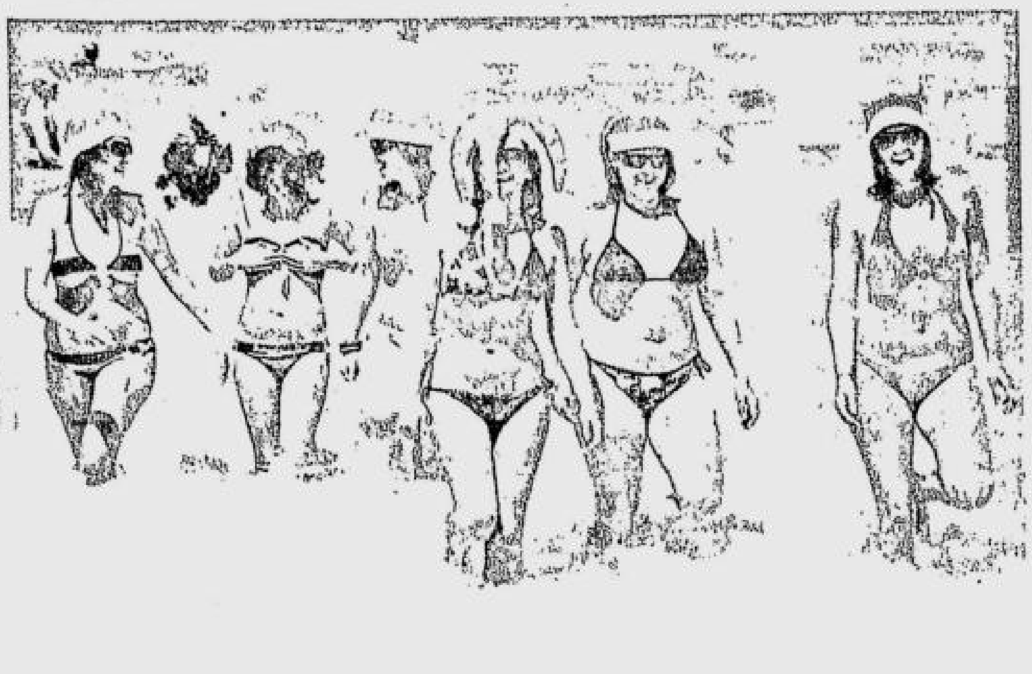

HOLIDAY-MAKERS from Ireland and Canada walk out of the waters of Manly Beach during Christmas Day celebrations in Sydney Dec. 25. Thousands of Australians were joined by tourists and backpackers in their traditional way of celebrating Christmas Day with a swim at a metropolitan beach. REUTERS

Merrymaking in Sydney after riots

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIAN POLICE PATROLLED Sydney's beaches in buggies and on horses decorated with tinsel and reindeer antlers on Sunday, as fears of fresh racial violence dissolved into a quiet Christmas Day.

On Cronulla beach, where gangs of white surfers and ethnic Lebanese clashed in alcohol-fueled riots two weeks ago, families spread out across the sand and children ran into the sea—all under the watchful eye of dozens of armed, uniformed police.

Policewomen kept watch from two tinsel-trimmed mounts, horses named Hero and Hollywood, which plodded along the sand wearing fake antlers, while other police officers climbed lifeguard towers or scooted along the beach in four-wheeled buggies.

"I think everybody has realized that violence is not the answer to all our problems," said Phil Wardman, sitting with his family on Cronulla's powdery sand, beneath a postcard-blue sky.

"I wanted to come down today to show I'm not afraid to come here."

Australia is trying hard to mend its image after the riots, which evoked old racist stereotypes and prompted police to throw a security cordon around Sydney's most popular beaches to head off threats of more violence from white supremacists.

Only a week ago, police made dozens of arrests and seized a frightening array of crude weapons, including petrol bombs, knuckle-dusters and wooden clubs studded with nails, from cars stopped and searched at seaside road-blocks.

World publicity of the riots and the police crackdown had sparked fears of a drop in tourism to Australia this summer, but Sydney's beaches appeared to have returned to near normal on Sunday despite the heavy police presence.

Hundreds of British and European backpackers and thousands of other sun-worshippers made their annual Christmas Day pilgrimage to Sydney's most famous summer playground, Bondi Beach, while police patrolled its esplanade in cars and on foot.

Private security guards checked all beachgoers' bags before allowing them on to the hallowed sand—but this was not a precaution against racial violence. After years of trouble with drunken louts, Bondi is now an alcohol-free zone at Christmas.

Reuters

US frees more Saddam aides

BAGHDAD—IRAQ'S NATIONAL security adviser said on Saturday he wanted to rearrest Saddam Hussein's former top weapons experts, as the US military confirmed the release of 14 more high-ranking detainees.

Scientists Rihab Taha and Huda Ammash—"Dr. Germ" and "Mrs. Anthrax" to the Western media—were among eight former senior figures under Saddam freed on Dec. 17. Along with several of the 14 more now technically freed, they appear to be still in US care for their own protection, awaiting flights abroad.

A lawyer for Ammash and others dismissed the announcement of Iraqi arrest warrants as "pure theatre," saying the government had agreed to a deal under which, he said, US forces had freed the 22 Saddam aides on condition they leave the country.

National Security Adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie said after he met top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf that he would not accept their being at liberty: "There are warrants of arrest for them issued by Iraqi judicial authorities and if they are released, we'll arrest them."

The Shiite Islamist-led government, bolstered by last week's election success, is clearly eager that supporters see it as being tough on Saddam, now on trial, and his followers. Many minority Sunni Arabs, dominant under the old regime, view the government as vindictive and accuse it of abusing human rights.

US officials have declined formally to name those freed.

"The 22 individuals no longer posed a security threat to the people of Iraq and to the Coalition forces," US commander Gen. George Casey said on Saturday in a joint statement with the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad.

US forces "therefore, had no legal basis to hold them any longer," the statement went on, adding: "The detainees have been released in Iraq. We have not transported any of them outside Iraq or provided them with passports or other travel documents."

Badia Aref, a Baghdad lawyer, said his client Ammash and the other former prisoners were in the process of leaving the country after being given passports by the Iraqi government on condition they stay away for at least three years.

Dismissing Rubaie's comments, he said the US authorities, had ruled that the Iraqi cases against the 22 had insufficient basis. US authorities say said they are still holding 65 high-ranking figures, including Saddam, as "high-value criminals" facing trial.

Casey and Khalilzad said: "We have had ongoing discussions over a 14-month period with the Iraqi government about releasing these detainees. The Iraqi government was informed that the US government could no longer hold these individuals."

Countering suggestions that the releases were a gesture to Sunnis after they took part peacefully in the Dec. 15 election, the Americans added: "The decision to release them was based on law, not on politics or any other consideration."

Reuters

Preserved remains of dodos found

AMSTERDAM—A mass grave of dodos, the famous flightless bird whose name became synonymous with stupidity, has been uncovered in Mauritius, scientists said.

The rare find will enable researchers to discover more about what happened to the bird, native to the Indian Ocean Island, which became extinct in the late 17th century.

Scientists from the Dutch Natural History Museum in Leiden said the remains were at least 2,000 years old.

"This new find will allow for the first scientific research into and reconstruction of the world in which the dodo lived, before Western man landed on Mauritius and wiped out the species," said a statement from the museum.

The dodo was discovered by Portuguese sailors in the late 16th century. Its lack of fear of humans, its plump size estimated at about 20 kg and its inability to fly meant the bird became extinct by about 1680.

Its name is similar to the Portuguese word for fool.

The last time dodo remains were discovered was in 1920. The latest find by Dutch and Mauritius scientists was made in October in a swampy area in the southeast of the island.

"The discovery yielded several dodo bones, including remains of dodo chicks and a very rare part of a bird's peak, only a few of which exist in the entire world," the statement said.

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Shell helps change Filipino lives for the better.

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GAS MO, BUKAS KO fuels the dreams of Shell gas attendants

Gasoline attendants by day, students by night – qualified Shell gas boys and girls who have ambitions to study and work hard for a better life are now given the opportunity to attend night school.

Initiated in June this year, an initial batch of 50 youths are now studying either basic computer or auto gas mechanic vocational course at the De La Salle Greenhills Night School – completely free of charge. This is Shell's way of giving dignity to their labor as well as lighting the way for them to train and work towards achieving their dreams.

Shell - Gawad Kalinga builds homes and dreams

As a socially-responsible company, Shell encourages volunteerism among its employees. The Shell - Gawad Kalinga Build Movement is one such concrete example of this. As part of the company's "Malasakit" project, the program is aimed at giving the staff opportunities to make their individual contribution to nation building. In this case, helping build homes and dreams for the homeless and needy.

The site of Shell - Gawad Kalinga Village is Barangay Libjo in Batangas City, just 2 kilometers away from the company's Tabangao refinery. To date, 14 colorful homes dubbed as "rainbow houses" have been built, with more homes being constructed through the joint effort of Shell staff and GK volunteers.

The Shell - Gawad Kalinga Village is the company's way of helping Gawad Kalinga achieve its goal of GK777 – to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years.

SKIL equips deserving youths the tools for a better future

Founded in 1982, SKIL (Sanayan sa Kakayahang Industriyal) is one of the projects under the Pilipinas Shell Foundation Youth Programs that provide industrial skills training for deprived but deserving Filipino youths. Under SKIL, they are provided a one-year scholarship grant towards earning a certification in courses such as automotive mechanic, welding, electricity and electro-mechanics, electronics, machine shop, sheet metal, industrial sewing machine operation, and data encoding.

The scholarship is comprised of three phases: First is the in-center training phase which is made up of 60% hands-on or actual work and 40% theory or attitudinal sessions. Second is the PLEAD (Personal Leadership Enhancement and Attitude Development) Workshop, a 3-day, live-in workshop on personal development. The third and last phase is on-the-job training which is 3-6 months long with hands-on exposure at accredited shops or industries.

SAKA breeds a new generation of farmers

An agricultural skills training program established in 1985, SAKA (Sanayan sa Kakayahang Agrikultura) has been transforming out-of-school youth into a new breed of farmers. The program seeks to encourage the youth to return to farming using techniques to improve farm productivity and management as well as the family income. To date, SAKA has produced over a thousand young farmers.

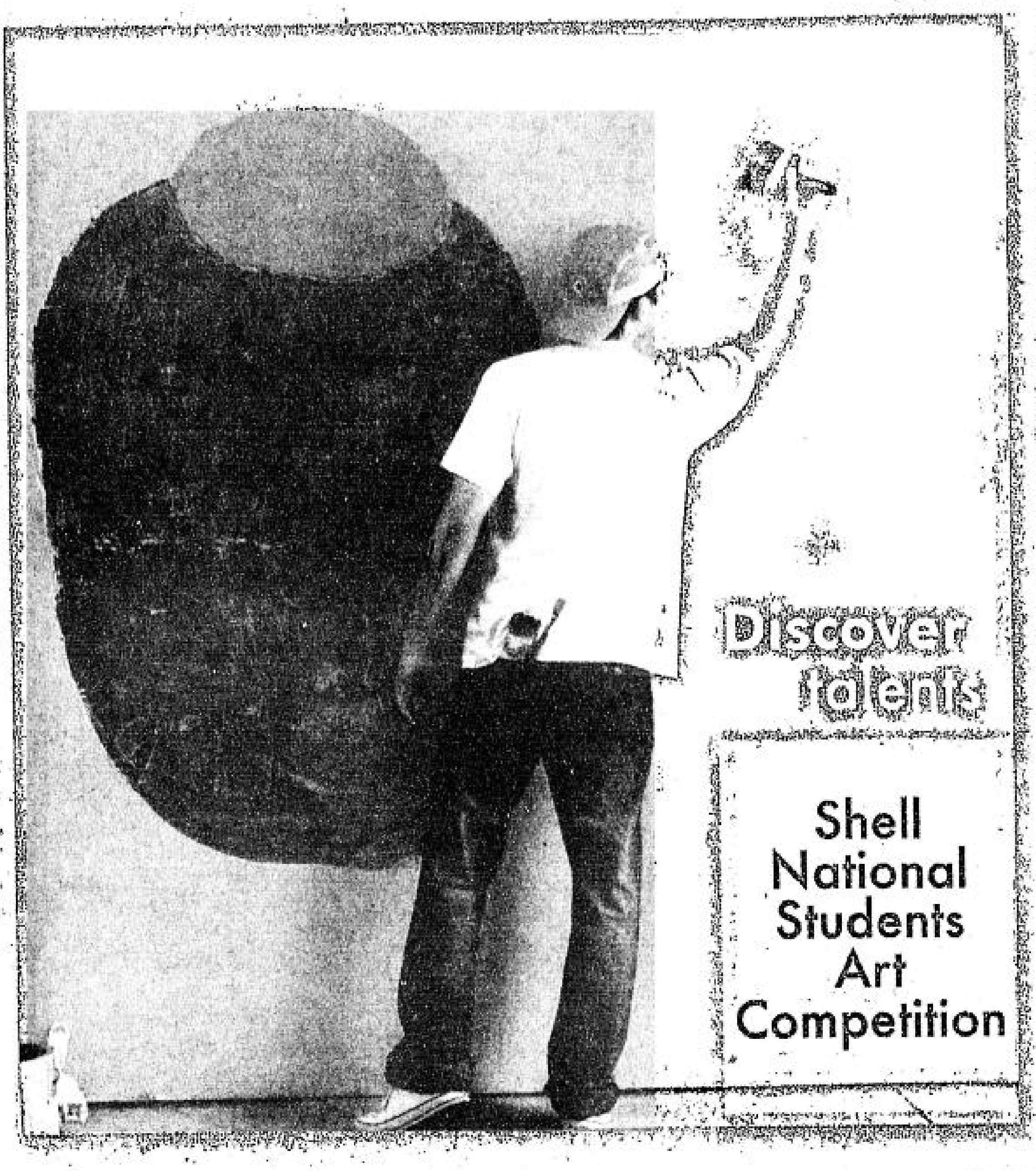
The qualified applicant receives a one-year training course that covers areas such as crop and animal production, agriculture and agro-forestry technology, farm management, equipment maintenance, and minor accounting and communication skills. The program is 70% hands-on and 30% theory. Besides training, it also provides start-up loans for the scholars so they can generate income by trading livestock and crops.

SKP keeps the entrepreneurial spirit alive

Launched last year, SKP (Sanayan sa Kakayahang Pangangalakal) is a 5-day entrepreneurship training program for women, fisherfolks, farmers, out-of-school youth and cooperatives all over the country.

The program recognizes the fact that entrepreneurs play a big role in helping provide more jobs and income to more people. The short course is designed to help scholars develop their entrepreneurial skills, acquainting them with the realities as well as the ins and outs of running a small business enterprise. Over a thousand scholars have benefited from the program in the short time it has been implemented.

To build a nation, we must shape a future.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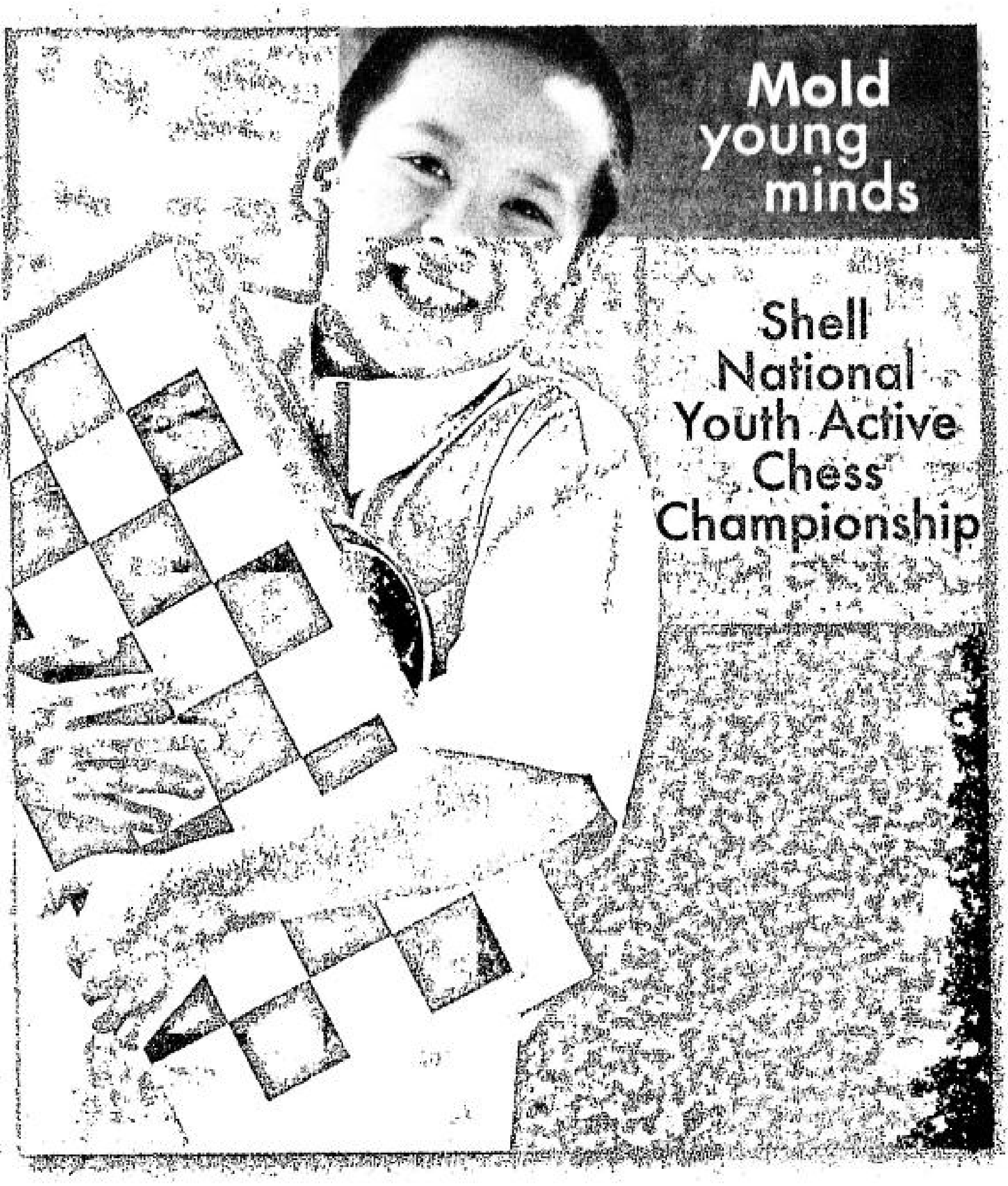
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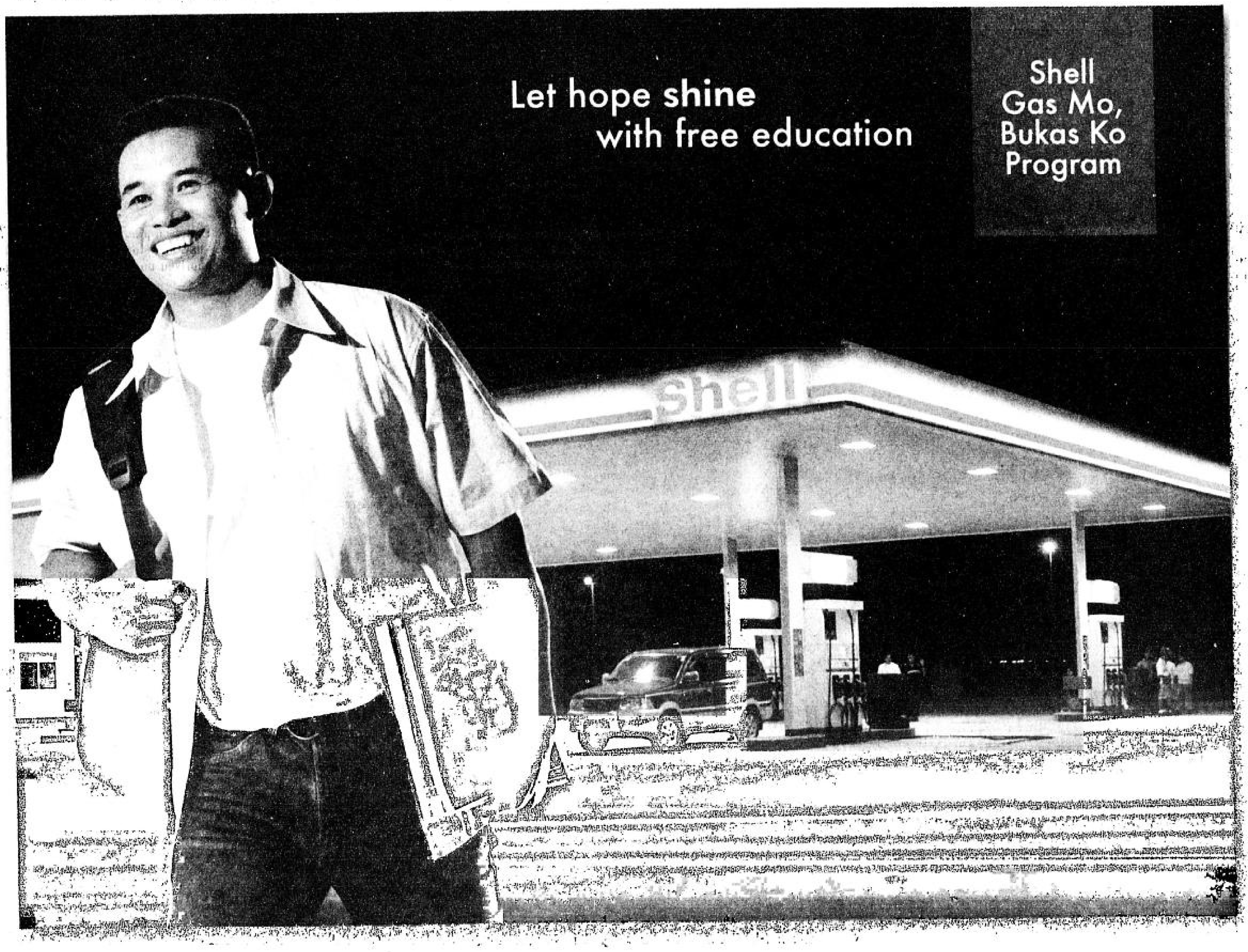
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OPINION

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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
• Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
• P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
• Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
• Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
• Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

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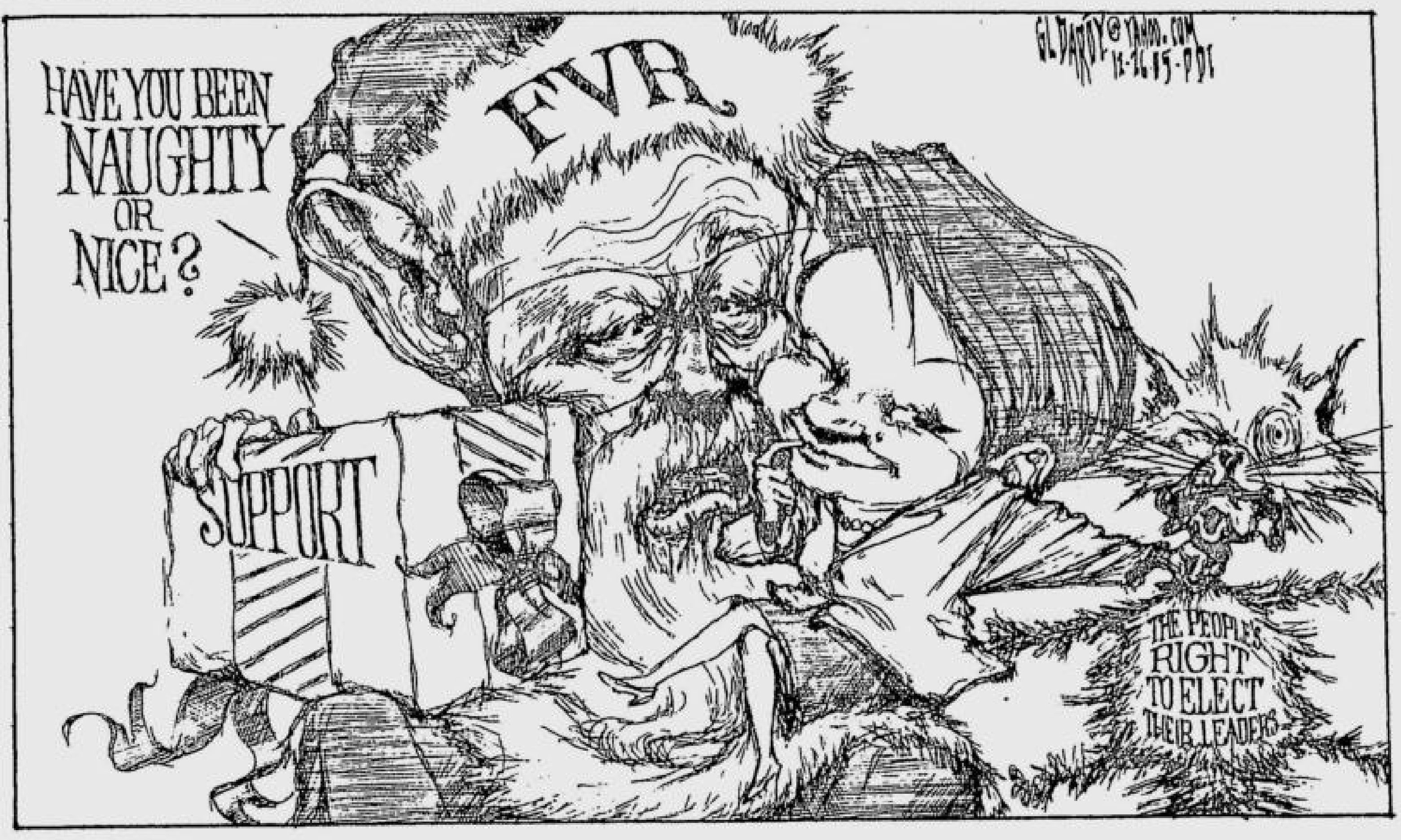
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Revolving door

EDITORIAL

THE APPOINTMENT OF ARTEMIO PANGANIBAN as the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has been shadowed by strategically targeted talk about the high court's newest fixture: President Macapagal-Arroyo's revolving door.

A high-ranking government official, pleading anonymity, claims inside knowledge about the President's remodeling plans for the judiciary: The decision to appoint Panganiban as Chief Justice Hilario Davide's successor was actually also a decision to appoint Senior Associate Justice Reynato Puno to succeed Panganiban when he reaches retirement age in 11 months, and then Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago to succeed Puno when he turns 70.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, the country's third-highest government official, has also claimed inside knowledge about the President's exercise of her power to appoint. After Panganiban, the irrepressible De Venecia said, the so-called tradition of seniority will be back in use. Puno will then succeed Panganiban to the chief justiceship, and then after him the most senior associate justice, and so forth.

A week, of course, is famously a long time in politics, so any forecast by any politician must be mixed with a sack-load of salt. Besides, reading the President's mind, anticipating her decisions months and even years down the road, is a tricky undertaking. This is not because she's a woman; resoluteness of will knows no gender. Rather, this is because her political career betrays a habitual changing of mind.

We must also keep in mind that both the unnamed government official and Speaker De Venecia cannot be entirely innocent of the desire to, well, manipulate the media: Not only to make news (which is part of a public official's responsibilities in the context of a liberal democracy's social contract with a free press), but also to drive the news in a certain direction (which is not).

Was the anonymous official testing the waters for the return of the controversial Santiago to the Supreme Court gene pool? Was De Venecia signaling his unwillingness to support Santiago for the judiciary's top post? Were they both wooing Puno, who is alleged to be unhappy with the President's decision?

The result of all this is a somewhat soured reception for Panganiban as the country's chief judge. No one contests his qualifications for the job, or his experience, or his peerless productivity. Those who criticize him are actually the President's critics; in their view, he is guilty (of political ploys, of being party to politicizing the judiciary) by association (with an ineradicably political and politicizing President).

This is unfortunate; Panganiban looks more than ready to continue Davide's judicial reforms. He has in fact already codified the objects of his reforming zeal. He calls them Cida: corruption, incompetence, delay in justice, and lack of access to the courts and their dispute resolution mechanisms. (If we may make a suggestion, he would be better off changing the code to read Acid; these four evils, after all, have a corrosive effect on both the judiciary and on society at large.)

But the much-talked-about installation of the President's revolving door, this time to the very portal of the Supreme Court, and using the rusty hinges of so-called seniority, can only get in Panganiban's way.

We believe the new Chief Justice will make the high court even more independent of both political branches of government. But because he and his eventual successors are appointed to office, their reputation for independence of mind cannot be completely under their control. Their reputation depends, in part, on the conduct of the appointing power.

The power to appoint, we have already written more than once before, is the power to disappoint. In Panganiban's case, it seems the disappointment is directed at the appointing power herself.

President Arroyo can help clear the obstacles in Panganiban's path by forthrightly declaring her refusal to install a revolving door in the Supreme Court. As in the case of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the chief of the national police, she must choose the next one not with her own personal and political interests in mind, but with those of the institution and the nation.

Napocor bloated Meralco's debt

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE NEW YEAR WILL BE A BAD YEAR FOR Meralco if developments in the last few days are any indication. If President Macapagal-Arroyo gives her imprimatur to a proposal by an unknown government official to take over Meralco if it does not pay an alleged P42-billion debt to the National Power Corp., then like the Napocor itself and other private companies taken over by the government through the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), this successful company will be run to bankruptcy. The losers will be not only the Lopezes and other stockholders of Meralco but also millions of people who depend on Meralco for their electricity.

How did this quarrel between the Napocor and Meralco come about? In 1994, Meralco contracted to buy electricity that the Napocor generates to distribute to its customers. During the power crisis that hit the Philippines during the Aquino and Ramos administrations, the latter encouraged Meralco and other investors to put up generation plants because Napocor was unable to supply the demand. This gave rise to the so-called IPPs, or Independent Power Producers, which now supply a big part of our electricity. Meralco put up three or four sister companies to generate power.

However, Ramos approved too many IPPs, with the result that we now have an oversupply of power. Under the contracts of the IPPs with the government, the latter has to pay the rated power-generation capacity of the plant even if the electricity is not used—in fact, even if it is not generated at all. That is the reason for the high cost of our electricity: we are paying for electricity we do not consume.

Meralco, meanwhile, has been buying its electricity from its own IPPs, so it is buying less than the contracted amount from Napocor. The Napocor is now billing Meralco for all the power it could have generated and sold to Meralco had the latter bought all the power it had contracted for. That and other charges, are what bloated Meralco's alleged debt to the Napocor.

Meralco says its obligations amount to only P15 billion.

In 2003, Meralco and Napocor signed a compromise settlement. After adjustments, Meralco's debt was brought down to P20.5 billion, payable in five to six years or until December 2006. Other differences are being threshed out by the Energy Regulatory Commission. In the meantime, the Epira law was passed mandating the privatization of the money-losing Napocor.

In the middle of all these, the confidential memorandum of the unknown official was leaked to the press. The memo still starts with P42 billion but admits that Meralco has acknowledged only a P15-billion obligation. To collect the P42 billion, the memo recommended three options:

1. Meralco will be asked to issue a promissory note or bond in favor of Napocor.

2. Napocor will convert the receivables into equity by receiving an equivalent value of Meralco shares.

3. Napocor will offer special programs and discounted rates to targeted markets.

The second is Napocor's preferred option, and the reason is obvious: Napocor will be sold or go bankrupt, whichever comes first. Either way, its highly paid officials will lose their jobs. If they control Meralco, they can transfer to it.

But three basic questions were not answered by the memo: (1) The settlement agreement is still pending before the ERC; (2) The plan and steps being taken are not in compliance with the Epira law; and (3) The memo wants to subvert the authority of the ERC.

To make heads or tails of the matter, I talked to a Meralco official over breakfast before Christmas and the poor guy was crying on his coffee. The options recommended by the memo were ridiculous, he said. He explained why one by one:

1. On the options of a promissory note or conversion of the debt to shares of stocks: There is no recognized liability on the part of Meralco as contained in the Settlement Agreement between Napocor and Meralco.

2. On the P42-billion debt: The amount is bloated. The memo said it is based on "minimum charges due for unconsumed energy levels for the period of Dec. 25, 2001 to Dec. 31, 2004." But that P42 billion includes interest rates and costs of fuel and other variable costs not actually incurred. "Minimum charges" do not include all these.

3. The memo made false claims: First, it claims that if the alleged debt is converted to equity in favor of the government, there will be no additional cost to Meralco customers. This is a lie. If indeed the P42 billion is based on "minimum charges," the amount will be passed on to customers as provided by the Settlement Agreement.

Second, it claimed that the debt-to-equity option will not inflict pain on ordinary stockholders of Meralco, nor will it change any of the stockholders' rights and benefits. Another lie. A government takeover will surely send the share price plummeting because many of the foreign stockholders, who own a substantial chunk of Meralco shares, will leave the country.

Third, the debt-to equity option will not result in a takeover. Still a lie. If there is no corporate takeover, why does the memo virtually dictate where Meralco should get its power? This violates the Epira law which mandates open access and retail competition.

Fourth, it subverts the authority of the ERC to settle the dispute. The memo turns off foreign investors because it undermines business policies and dealings. Foreign investors want stability and consistency in government policies and rules.

The Napocor is bleeding; it has a long record of mismanagement and corruption; it has the biggest debts in the country; it is beyond rehabilitation. Why entrust the handling of a successful company like Meralco to it?

Different breed

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT NO ARTIST OF great importance died this year. They did so plentifully in 2002 and 2004. I counted about a dozen in the first and eight in the second (and for some reason, they always came in pairs). Enough to make you demand from heaven why its dweller in His infinite wisdom wants to depopulate this country of artists rather than politicians. Why God in His unfathomable ways wants to take away our most precious resource and leave us with our poorest one.

The good news is that no artist (that I know) died this year. The bad, indeed truly horrible news, is that four of the most decent persons on earth did. They were Jaime Cardinal Sin, Raul Roco, Haydee Yorac and Sr. Mariani Dimaranan. Like I said, for some reason, they seem to come in pairs. But the even worse news is that every one of them uncannily symbolizes the virtues that have died as well in this country.

Cardinal Sin you may fault for the cardinal sin of pride, but also have to credit with the cardinal virtue of courage. From hindsight, he had more virtue than vice, which is as best as can be said of the measure of a man. I myself have little doubt that if he had lived a little longer, GMA would no longer be with us, or at least would no longer be free to torment us. Cory and Sin were a tandem, both of them offering an enormous source of moral strength for the country—the one secular, the other religious. By their individual selves, they could only move molehills. Working together, they could move mountains, like they did 20 years ago next February.

If Sin had lived, he would most likely have been at Cory's side last July when she rose to indict their erstwhile protégé. If he had lived, his would have been the voice that thundered among the faithful instead of the squeaky one that issued from the mouth of Archbishop Fernando Capalla. If he had lived a little longer, he might have shown once more that *jueteng* (and its clerical beneficiaries) and not religion is the opium of the people.

But GMA is execrably lucky. Last December, Fernando Poe Jr. caved in; this year, Sin. Had either one lived longer, we would have a new leader right now, a genuine one. It's enough to make you believe someone made a Faustian exchange, soul for power.

Roco I've written about considerably. And I still think he is the best president we never had. Well, it's a tossup between him and Jovito Salonga, whom I also supported in 1992. Uncannily, both suffered from being perceived as nearing the end of the road, Salonga for being old and Roco for having cancer. Salonga has had the last laugh, being still around and living a full life, outliving friend and foe, but also probably the last cry, seeing his beloved country go the way it has over the years. Roco, alas, did reach the end of the road this year, surrendering to the big C.

I've always thought Roco could have done for the country what he did for the Department of Education. When he became education secretary shortly after Edsa II, the department was far more known for its corruptive influence than its educative one. To say it was a snake pit is to insult snakes. In less than a year, he turned it into the best department in the country, by the reckoning of global institutions. The country is the macrocosm of that department. But in lieu of Roco, the country fell into the hands of GMA, by theft. To say it is a snake pit today is to insult pits.

Yorac was the INQUIRER's Person of the Year some years ago, and no honor was more richly deserved. Honesty was her middle name, the scourge of dictators as a law professor in UP, of cheats and goons as Comelec chief, and of cronies and crooks (chief of them Danding Cojuangco whom she battled over his ill-gotten gains from the coco levy funds till the day she died) as PCGG chief. She was resolutely honest for no other reason than that it was in her nature, she couldn't help it. In the same way that scorpions are resolutely treacherous because it is in their nature, they cannot help it.

Some months ago, someone asked me: But if we are going to have elections after we oust GMA, what's our assurance they would be clean? Who's to run it? I said without hesitation: Haydee Yorac. But not long afterward, she too died. Truly, it's enough to make you believe someone sold soul for power with the devil.

The last is by no means the least. Sister Mariani's middle initials are TFD. That, for those who have lived in limbo, means Task Force Detainees, the local equivalent of Amnesty International, and just as recognized globally for its contribution to human rights. TFD arose at a time when to push for human rights was to risk being a victim of human rights abuses oneself. Sister Mariani it was who raised it from the dark pit of martial law. Hence, its name: It began as a concern for the plight of the political detainees in the camps and for the disappeared, and quickly spread out to the plight of the citizens in general who were detainees in the larger prison of martial law. Some people are just plain good human beings. Sister Mariani was one of them.

This year saw the deaths of four people who showed variously the best that a religious can be, the best that a politician can be, the best that a public official can be, the best that a human being can be. In many ways, the perfect symbol for the things that are dying, if they have not already done so, in this country.

"*Pare-pareho lang sila*" is a phrase you keep hearing when you ask people to move to remove a usurper. For those who say that, look at these four people and see for yourself how absolutely wrongheaded that notion is. They're not alone; there are others like them. They're all the same?

Not by a bloody long mile.

The Bible and the Constitution

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CHIEF JUSTICE tends to invite speculation about how the Supreme Court, under a new leadership, will resolve questions crying for an answer. I for one have been waiting for the Court to answer the question raised several months ago whether the gag rule in Executive Order 464 is constitutional or whether the government is right in the way it has dealt with public demonstrations. I had hoped that a decision on these subjects could have been the valedictory of the retiring Chief Justice, but for reasons that we do not know, that did not happen. A resolution of these might yet be the inaugural decision of the new Chief Justice.

These, however, will not be the only constitutional issues which the Supreme Court will have to face in the coming months. There are pending cases now and there will be more, especially as we approach the campaign for Charter change. Along what theory of interpretation will the new Chief Justice, during his brief stint, lead the Court or try to lead the Court? I deliberately say "try to lead the Court" because constitutional issues are decided by the Court en banc and the banc is composed of 15 independent justices who rarely are in unanimous agreement in difficult cases.

The problem of constitutional interpretation flows from the text itself. The text consists of a combination of very specific provisions and very general provisions. The specific provisions can become obsolete. But for as long as they are there, they remain law until they are successfully amended. There is a growing perception, for instance, that some of the specific economic provisions have become more of an obstacle to progress than a help. And the more specific electoral provisions, relatively new, are bewailed by politicians.

There are also the more general provisions, most of them found in the Bill of Rights. They embody concepts that elude easy interpretation. Because they are expressed in general terms, they allow substantial discretion to official interpreters—in our case, the justices of the Supreme Court.

In his acceptance statement, the new Chief Justice compared his role to that of Pope Benedict XVI in his admission of his own human limitations. But there is another sense in which the comparison is apt. Very recently, a well-known theologian wrote about the parallelism between the way the Bible and the Constitution are interpreted. Both the Bible and the Constitution have their respective communities of interpreters. For the Bible, there are scholars, theologians, pastors and the Church magisterium under the leadership of the Pope; for the Constitution, there are also legal scholars, lawyers and the Supreme Court under the leadership of the Chief Justice. In the case of the Bible, the "official hermeneutics" is applied by Church councils and confessions, while in the case of the Constitution, official interpretation is given by the Supreme Court. In the process of grappling with obscurities and apparent contradictions in the text, both interpretative communities produce learned commentaries seeking to apply the text to developing situations and problems. When confronted with great difficulties of interpretation, the unofficial interpretative communities have recourse to the Holy Spirit in the shape of Church councils and magisterium or the Supreme Court.

A key problem for Bible interpreters is the "literal sense" of the text. They have to deal with the tension between the historicity of the events described and their spiritual meaning. For the Constitution, what is often debated about is what the "original intent" of the framers was and whether that intent has been ossified in the text. The debate is between "originalists" or "literalists" and the "progressives" or "judicial activists." We recently saw a little bit of this in the Supreme Court's divided opinion on the constitutionality of the Mining Act where, incidentally, the new Chief Justice played a leading role.

For as long as we have a Constitution, the tension between "originalism" and "activism" will continue. Several reasons are given in defense of originalism. Originalists say that judges should not usurp the power of elected representatives. They say that originalism preserves the authority of the Court as guardian of the authority of the law. Non-originalism leads to subjectivism or even elitism. Amending the Constitution should be left to the people after serious public debate. In that way respect is given to the Constitution as a binding contract.

Non-originalists have their reasons, too. They say that it is not always easy to deduce the original intent of the framers and much less of the people who ratify the Constitution. Intentions are not always unanimous, or clear, or meant to be permanent. Besides, no written Constitution can anticipate the various ways in which government might oppress the people. What Constitutional Commission ever thought of EO 464? Since the amendment process is difficult and rarely used, non-originalism allows judges to head off crises not anticipated by the framers. The Constitution must be seen not as unchangeable matter but as an evolving organism. Finally, while the spirit can give life, the letter can kill.

In the final analysis, the key problem for Bible interpreters and interpreters of the Constitution is the preservation of the heritage which both Bible and Constitution represent. Circumstances change. In both Theology and Constitutional Law, there is room for and there has been development of doctrine. But development should not mean departure from the original spirit. That is a challenge for both Pope and Chief Justice.

Gifts

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

IN THE HASTE OF MAKING LAST-MINUTE preparations for Christmas, my attention was again caught by the poignant sight of hundreds of lumads, mostly from the Ata-Manobo tribe, wandering about the main streets of Davao City soliciting food, money and used clothes, while playing tribal music and performing tribal dances. The multitude, composed mostly of women, with their babies in tow, children and the elderly, started to descend upon Davao City early this month and are housed temporarily in a gym located in the Bankerohan Public Market.

To most Davaoeños, though, the presence of the lumads during this season is no longer new. In fact, the city government under Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has made it an annual tradition to invite the lumads to come to Davao and "share with city residents the spirit of Christmas." Transportation, basic food and medical services are provided by the city government. The gesture is to show the city's appreciation and concern for the lumads, said Duterte, who is also credited with appointing deputy mayors from the city's different Moro and lumad tribes in his administration.

Indeed, the gesture may be reflective of the changing attitude toward the lumads by the majority settler-residents, who in the past were apathetic, if not averse, to their presence.

However, except for the fact that lumads are also seen during the annual tourism-oriented festivals, like Kadayawan sa Davao, most Davaoeños would readily admit that they know little of the history, culture and struggles of the lumads. Maybe, such ignorance can also be attributed to the fact that there is also a dearth of materials dealing with the subject.

It is in this light that I say that the recent publication of three books by Mindanawon authors dealing with the historicity of the lumads are indeed great gifts, like the ones brought by the biblical three kings during the birth of Jesus. The first one, "Davao: Reconstructing History from Text and Memory," is authored by a multi-awarded poet and fictionist, Dr. Macariu D. Tiu of the Ateneo de Davao University (AdDU). Published by AdDU's Research and Publication Office (RPO) for MINCODE, Tiu's recent scholarly book traces the rich history of Davao long before the Spaniards and Americans arrived to colonize it. The book paints "a portrait of one of the largest sub-regions of Mindanao that is the most extensive and encompassing by far," commented fellow author Patricio N. Abinales. "It is a product of careful critical analysis of printed data and of oral recollections by informants who lived in Davao at various points of its history."

Pushing back beyond 1848 when the Basque conquistador Jose Uyanguren first set foot in Davao, Tiu argues that Davao has long been a vital region for commerce, trade and politics. Of more important note, in this recent book, Tiu carefully narrates the history of the different lumad groupings that inhabit Davao, then and now, giving the reader not only a lesson of the past but of understanding the present. He also incorporated a chapter on local heroes, lumads and settlers alike, who waged anti-colonial and nationalist struggles then and now but were all ignored in most history books.

The second "gift", also published by AdDU's RPO for the Mindanawon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogue (MICD) is "Sikami'n Lumad," a collection of poems, essays, legends, short stories, research and studies and rituals written by 25 lumad authors from the different parts and tribes of Mindanao. A product of several workshops initiated by MICD led by Fr. Albert Alejo, S.J., "Sikami'n Lumad" is perhaps the first book of its kind that is written with the end view of learning and understanding the lumad's history, tradition and aspirations direct from the lumads themselves.

While most of the materials were written in the dialect, with corresponding Filipino translation provided by MICD, it did not deviate from its purpose of presenting a message that the struggle of the lumads in Mindanao is not only about regaining their ancestral lands or keeping their almost extinct culture and traditions. "*Mahalaga rin dito ang paggiit para kilalanin ng lahat ng tao ang kanilang pag-iral, ang kanilang kaibahan, at ang katotohanan na hindi lang sila nakaraan kundi hinaharap din. Kung tutuusin, ang pagkilala ay hindi pinipilit. Inaani ito pagkatapos ng pagsisikap na magpakilala sa sarili. Kaya nga ang mga lumad mismo ang umaamin na kailangan nilang matutong magsalita—at magsulat!*" Alejo said.

The final "gift" is aptly titled "Mystic Wanderers in the Land of Perpetual Departure" and written by Karl M. Gaspar, a Redemptorist lay brother now based in Kulaman, Sultan Kudarat. While Gaspar's latest book, published by the Institute of Spirituality in Asia, mainly deals with the historicity of the "Church of the Poor" pioneered by church workers in Mindanao, it nonetheless touches on the theme of the lumads of Mindanao.

"Mystic Wanderers" provides a narrative of nine men and women from different Catholic religious congregations who continue to serve the "Church of the Poor" in Mindanao by engaging, in what Gaspar terms as "urgent pastoral ministries" among lumads and Moros, and for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

Gaspar's recent publication argues that there is a "nascent movement in Mindanao" geared toward a "spirituality that makes sense." This "spirituality" empowered church workers, like the nine persons cited in the book—"the mystic-wanderers"—to pursue their commitment to serve the lumads, the Moros and the powerless in Mindanao despite the daily hardships and challenges that they face.

To Dr. Tiu, Brother Karl and the authors of "Sikami'n Lumad," I say thank your for these gifts.

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Back to Rizal

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

EVEN AS THE COUNTRY IS DIVIDED TODAY IN three—for the government, against the government, and the suicidally indifferent—it is virtually united when it comes to one thing: the sublime irrelevance of Rizal to their lives.

In his magnificent, but not often read biography "Rizal," the late Teodoro M. Locsin Sr. observed:

"A man is presumed to have intended all the consequences of his act. Rizal was a revolutionary, for he incited the people to a revolution. That he did not mean to do so is beside the point.

"The voice of moderation, pleading for due process of law under an absolute despotism, arguing the possibility of persuading the tiger to change its stripes and cease to be a tiger, does not know the tiger. Asking the tiger and the lamb to lie down together in gentleness—as though it were possible—disarms the lamb and feeds the tiger. It is a form of pharisaism: doing evil with a good conscience. Ultimately, the tiger, grown dull and stupid from undisputed rule, fails to distinguish between friend and food and devours not only lamb but pharisee.

"In the story of his life as a revolutionary by consequence rather than by intention, the distaste for violence however necessary and the distrust of the masses native to him provide a kind of counterpoint to the main and classic theme of oppression and revolt. Rizal's death, a monument to serene courage and intellectual confusion, of a peace that passes all understanding—his death which precipitated the revolution was one more instance of the peculiar logic and morality of the historical processes, the delicate perversity and smiling savagery of the gods."

A perversity and logic Locsin saw in Rizal—and one that can always be said to have manifested itself persistently in our experience as a growing nation: Rizal, who had proclaimed the bourgeoisie a rose blooming on a dunghill (the dunghill being the masses), adopted as avatar of the revolution by the masses themselves and his fellow ilustrados as well; Jose Abad Santos, who died for his autonomous government but who also willingly died out of loyalty to the Great North American Nation, which had crushed Malolos, proclaimed a martyr to patriotism; Benigno Aquino Jr., who had come home to reason and appeal to the better instincts of the man who had jailed him for so long, assassinated and made supreme icon of the religious revival now known as Edsa; and the farmers at Mendiola Bridge in Cory Aquino's time come to supplicate their government and mowed down in the same manner that Russian peasants were massacred in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg.

This is not to say that being a reluctant and accidental martyr, Rizal should be deprived of his status as our secular St. Stephen. Indeed, one could say that precisely because of his dignity throughout the trial, which was meant to make him a scapegoat for the Revolution, he earned his distinction as first among patriots. For though he did leave a document behind condemning the Revolution, we can see that the Spaniards, in a momentary fit of intelligence, chose not to circulate it because it was not condemnation enough, but merely a statement of indignation over the Revolution being premature.

You can see in his "Ultimo Adios," too, that there was no distinction to his mind between his fate and the fate of those dying in the trenches of the Katipunan:

Others are giving you their lives on fields of battle,
Fighting joyfully, without hesitation, or thought for the consequence.
How it takes place is not important. Cypress, laurel or lily,
Scaffold or battlefield, in combat or in cruel martyrdom,
It is the same when what is asked of you is for your country and your home.

Let Rizal's contemporary, Apolinario Mabini, have the final say. Writing in "La Revolucion Filipina," he penned this estimation of Rizal:

"[Rizal] was found guilty of having been [the Revolution's] chief instigator because, had it not been for the articles he had published in La Solidaridad and for his novels, the people would never have taken to politics. This judgment was totally incorrect because political activities in the Philippines antedated Rizal, because Rizal was only a personality created by the needs of these activities: if Rizal had not existed, somebody else would have played his role. The movement was by nature slow and gentle, it had become violent because obstructed. Rizal had not started the resistance, yet he was condemned to death: were he not innocent, he would not be a martyr.

"In contrast to [Fr.] Burgos who wept because he died guiltless, Rizal went to the execution ground calm and even cheerful to show that he was happy to sacrifice his life, which he had dedicated to the good of all the Filipinos, confident that in love and gratitude they would always remember him and follow his example and teaching. In truth, the merit of Rizal's sacrifice consists precisely in that it was voluntary and conscious. He had known perfectly well that if he denounced the abuses which the Spaniards were committing in the Philippines, they would not sleep in peace until they had encompassed his ruin; yet he did so because, if the abuses were not exposed, they would never be remedied. From the day Rizal understood the misfortunes of his native land and decided to work to redress them, his vivid imagination never ceased to picture at every moment of his life the terrors of the death that awaited him; thus he learned not to fear it, and had no fear when it came to take him away; the life of Rizal, from the time he dedicated it to the service of his native land, was therefore a continuing death, bravely endured until the end for love of his countrymen. God grant that they will know how to render to him the only tribute worthy of his memory: the imitation of his virtues."

To Mabini's prayer, we can only say amen.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph/blog

Through the storm and the darkness

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

ON THE COAST OF NEW JERSEY IN THE UNITED STATES, there is a place called Sandy Hook, forming the western arm of the entrance to New York Harbor. The entrance itself faces south, and so ships coming from Europe must swing northward to enter it. In the days of the sailing ships, if a northeast storm was blowing, this turn was not easy, and many a ship was driven aground on Sandy Hook, to break up under the pounding of the waves. There is still a lighthouse there to guide the ships in, and in the lighthouse a small museum. There I noticed a case with a glass cover containing several iron cylindrical objects, each with a hook on one end and a tag attached to it. Each tag read: "Fired over (*name of a ship*) on (*date*); (*a number*) men taken off."

The cylinders were actually projectiles, which were fired by the Coast Guard from a small cannon on the shore, dragging a line out to a ship in distress. The line was used to pull out a stronger rope, which was used to bring ashore the seamen from the stricken ship.

As I read more about the history of the lighthouse, I learned that the cannon was a relatively late invention. Earlier generations of the Coast Guard would launch a lifeboat and go out themselves to take the men off. Anyone who has seen the storm waves coming in on that coast, with the speed and power of freight-trains, will be amazed that one could launch a lifeboat through the surf. Yet launch it they did, time and again, and faced the waves, relying only on the strength of their arms on the oars and the skill of the steersman.

I imagined the feelings of seamen on a ship aground there, feeling it breaking up under them, as they saw the lifeboat coming through the dark and the storm. Overwhelming joy perhaps, and certainly gratitude to the brave men who were risking their own lives to save seamen whom they had never met. Fear also, as they were asked to abandon the temporary safety of the stricken ship and entrust themselves to the Coast Guard men in the lifeboat.

I tell this as a parable, a corrective to the "sweet baby Jesus" sentimentality and "Jingle Bells" nonsense (in a country which has never seen snow!) which too often blur the real meaning of Advent and of Christmas. For Christ did not come from above like those cylinders fired from the shore; rather He came through the storm and the night of human sinfulness and injustice, experiencing their effects on His own skin as they say The Gospels make this clear even in the infancy narratives. They present Him as homeless at His birth, born in a cave. The first to greet Him were not the powerful of the earth, but shepherds, outcasts of society whose testimony could not even be accepted in courts of law. Simeon predicted that He would be a source of division among His people. Herod sought His life, and He was taken as a refugee to Egypt. These all foreshadowed what was to come.

He then is the coast guardsman, facing the darkness and the storm to save us, asking that we trust Him and put our lives in His hands. Here is the true source of the overwhelming joy and gratitude which should well up in our hearts as we kneel before the Belen on Christmas Eve.

But joy and gratitude are not enough; neither is blind trust. The great figure who opens the Advent liturgy is John the Baptizer, and his message was one of repentance. In the Gospel of Luke (3:10-14), it is made very concrete and could be directed to us today:

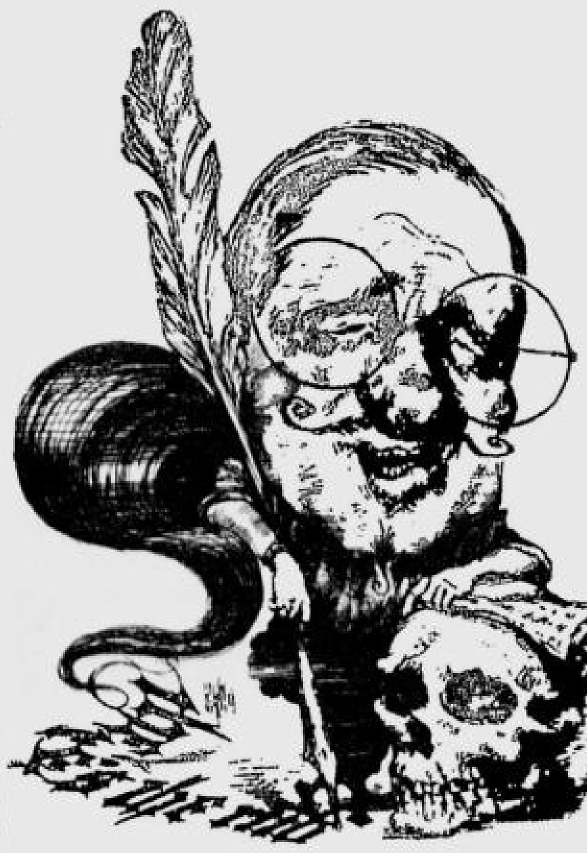
When all the people asked him, "What must we do, then?" he answered: "If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one who has something to eat must do the same." There were tax collectors, too, who came for baptism, and he said to them, "Exact no more than your rate." Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"

It is easy for those of us who are not dishonest tax collectors, or politicians pocketing the people's money or using it to win elections, or mulcting soldiers or policemen or petty officials, to point the finger at those who are and to demand reform. But what about "If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one who has something to eat must do the same?"

In Payatas-by-the-dump, whole families do not have enough to eat. For some 15 years now, we have been running a milk-feeding program there for malnourished infants, and we no longer find that they gain weight like they used to, because in some cases, for lack of other food, the milk powder is being used for the whole family! And yet in the past year, while the need has increased, contributions for the program have dropped by more than one-third.

Those who might wish to contribute to the program can reach me on the Ateneo de Manila campus, or at P.O. Box 250, UP Post Office, Quezon City, or by phone at 426-6001-4659. It could be an expression of gratitude, trust and solidarity with Him Who came through the darkness and the storm to share but also to relieve the pain of the poor.

IN THE NEWS



Conrado de Quiros

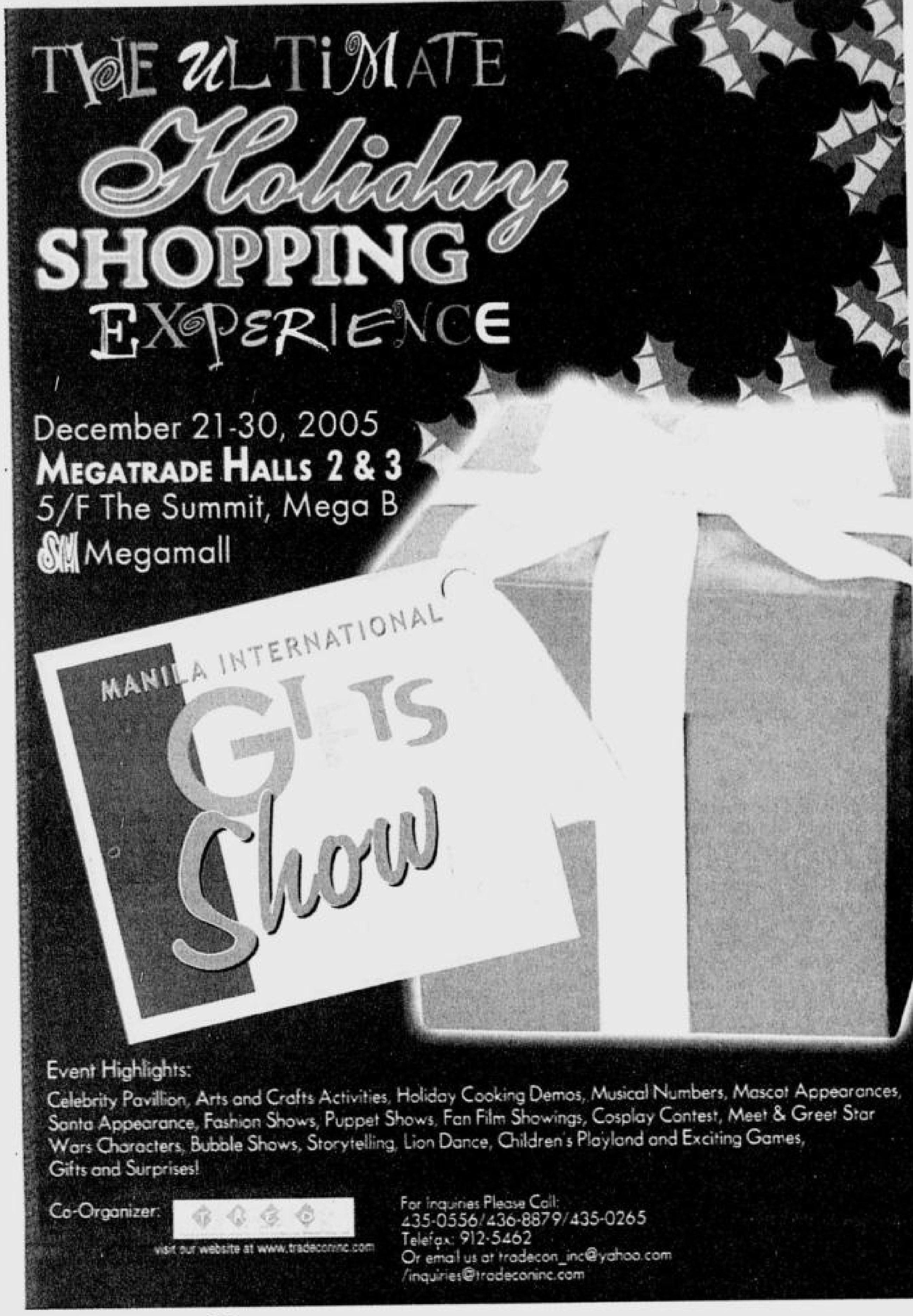
Veteran's widow got no pension for 2 years

ON BEHALF OF MY MOTHER, FLORENcia R. Aranas, the surviving spouse of Basiano V. Aranas, a World War II veteran, may I request payment of unpaid pension due her from May 1999 to June 2001?

We sent all the supporting documents needed through LBC last Nov. 28, 2005. We have been waiting for almost six years and my mother needs financial help for medication.

She's already 86 years old. Can you make this Christmas season a happy and meaningful one for her?

—PEEDI R. ARANAS,
38-A Acacia St., Lahug, Cebu City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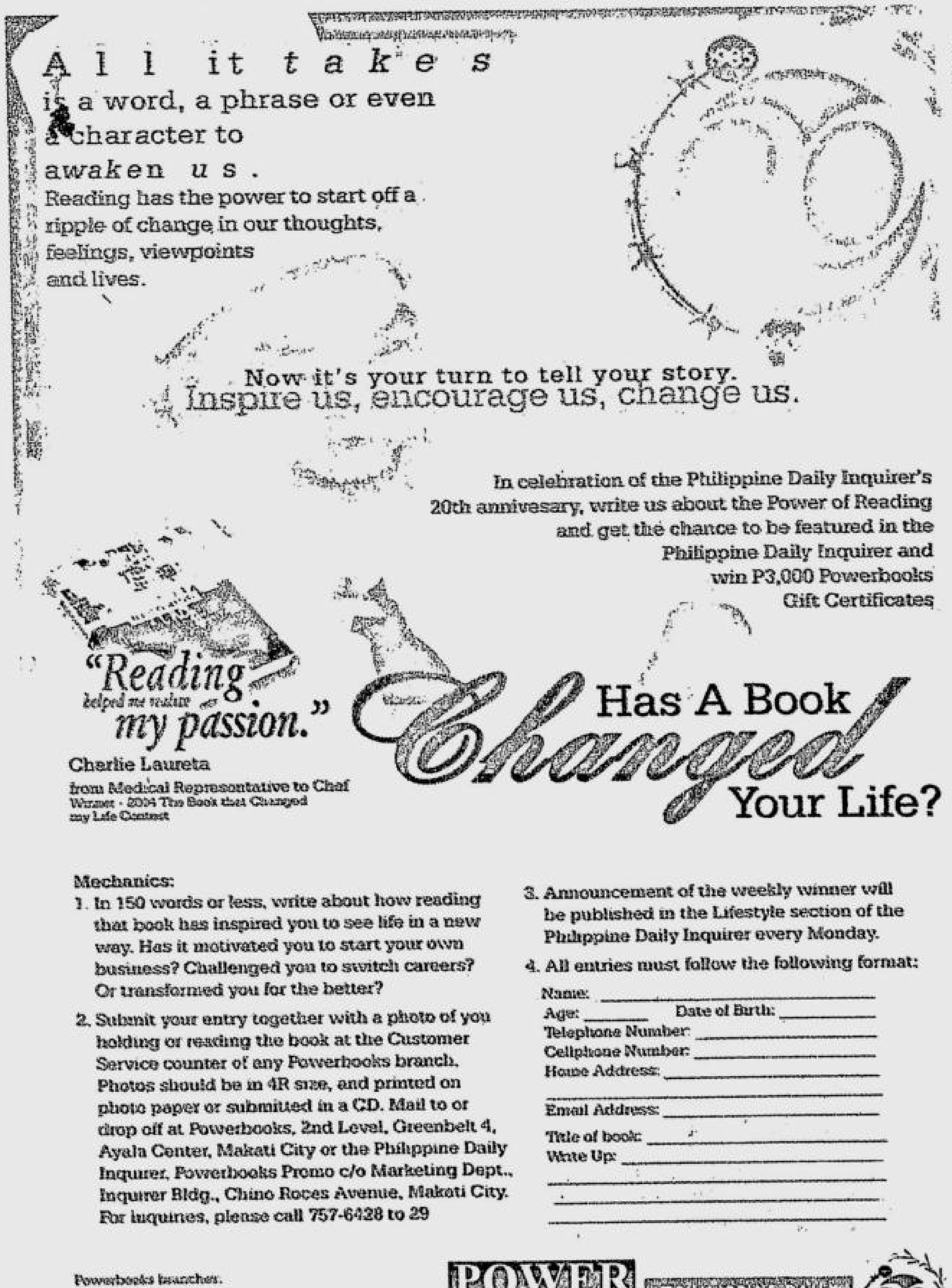
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a character to
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Inspire us, encourage us, change us.

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"Reading helped me realize my passion."
Charlie Laureta
from Medical Representative to Chef
Winner - 2004 The Book that Changed my Life Contest

Has A Book Changed Your Life?

Mechanics:
1. In 150 words or less, write about how reading that book has inspired you to see life in a new way. Has it motivated you to start your own business? Challenged you to switch careers? Or transformed you for the better?
2. Submit your entry together with a photo of you holding or reading the book at the Customer Service counter of any Powerbooks branch. Photos should be in 4R size, and printed on photo paper or submitted in a CD. Mail to or drop off at Powerbooks, 2nd Level, Greenbelt 4, Ayala Center, Makati City or the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Powerbooks Promo c/o Marketing Dept., Inquirer Bldg., Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City. For inquiries, please call 757-6428 to 29
3. Announcement of the weekly winner will be published in the Lifestyle section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer every Monday.
4. All entries must follow the following format:

Name: ____________
Age: ______ Date of Birth: ________
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Title of book: ____________
Write Up: ____________
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Rediscovering the joys, meaning of Christmas

IN 1223, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI COMMEMOrated the birth of Jesus with a "nativity scene," and the "Crib" became one of the traditional and best-loved symbols of Christmas.

Today, however, amid a consumerist Christmas attitude, we are allowing our communities to be stripped of our traditions—the dearest and most venerable, the oldest and sweetest, the truest and most beautiful. Carelessly, through neglect or snobbery, we are abandoning Christ to follow the latest meaningless fad.

A sensitive Christian would not let anything replace the Crib. Commemorating the Crib should mean passing on popular piety and religiosity. Putting up the Crib in homes and public places—not in a folkloric manner but as a symbol of faith, prayer and offering—should mean rediscovering joy and the solidarity of friendship, the tenderness of human relations, and the enchanting spirit of pious children and adults.

In advancing the faith, family and fraternity, may we all strive to keep Christ in Christmas!

—PAUL KOKOSKI,
234 Columbia Drive,
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Pretending government doesn't exist

THIS IS A REACTION TO ASUNCION DAVID Maramba's article "For every family, a scholar." (PDI/11/25/05)

We have a small art gallery in Malaybalay City. Its objective is to raise funds for scholarships. One time, in a radio interview (I was then the executive secretary for the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Culture under the chairmanship of Bishop Honesto Ch. Pacana, S.J.), I was dumbfounded to learn from a girl about to graduate with a bachelor's degree in education that, through all her years in college, her schooling was funded by a married man, a principal of a distant school. She said that as soon as she graduated (in March 2005), she would drop him.

Another girl had been working for her education since Grade 4 doing a man's work, like chopping wood, fetching water, etc.

Our family has long been with "working students," especially when our children were still growing up. Now, we have an above-average scholar on her third year (teacher's course), whose schooling is funded by Balay Malay Gallery. She is the eldest of eight children. She has been looking for work so that she could save money within one year, to go back to school.

We would like to ask Maramba to carry on promoting the One Family One Scholar program. Let's just ignore government as though it never existed.

—ADELIZA D. BARRETTO,
Balay Malay Art Center,
Malaybalay City

Forms for election returns were well secured

THIS IS TO CLARIFY THE NEWS ITEM, TItled "Mike A's bldg., strafed; Puno car bombed." (PDI, 12/8/05)

Ernest Printing Corp. printed election forms only upon a written order issued by the Printing Committee of the Commission on Elections. The carbonless paper used for the election forms were stored in a room secured with three padlocks, whose keys were separately kept by representatives of the Printing Committee, Comelec Reception Committee, and Commission on Audit. The room could not be opened unless the three representatives were together.

Carbonless paper brought out of the room was recorded. The assigned watchers of all accredited political parties and election watch groups were present to witness the withdrawal.

During the actual printing of election forms, the watchers were always present and they could see how many were being printed each day by each printing machine. Spoiled forms were also recorded and subsequently destroyed, also in the presence of all watchers. After the printing, the forms were stored in a room also secured with three padlocks. They remained there until it was time to print the serial numbers and names of cities and municipalities on each set of election forms. Immediately after the serial numbers and names of cities or municipalities had been printed, the election returns were turned over to the Reception Committee for verification, and then to the Comelec Shipping Committee for packing and shipment to the field offices. Through all these processes, the watchers were always present.

Because [illegible] on forms with printing errors (discovered [illegible]ng verification) or lost/destroyed during shipment had to be immediately replaced, extra forms with no serial numbers had to be printed to avoid a failure of election due to delayed delivery or lack of them. The same strict security arrangements for the storage, withdrawal, printing, verification and shipment of these "contingency" returns were implemented—and again, always in the presence of watchers.

The request for additional carbonless paper was made to cover all paper requirements because the elections under the manual system require bigger election return forms and the quantity of paper originally ordered, which was meant for a "continuous form" in an automated system, was not enough. When the additional paper supply arrived, it was subjected to the same strict security measures on storage, printing, verification and delivery.

After the elections, the "contingency stock" was turned over to the Comelec and destroyed.

We hope the issue on the "overprinting" of election forms will be finally put rest, considering the presence of watchers and the imposition of strict and transparent security measures every step of the process.

—ERNESTO C. LIM,
president,
Ernest Printing Corp.,
28 M. H. Del Pilar St.,
Grace Park, Caloocan City

Again, how to measure the need for NFA

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) IS once again being pilloried because of its operational "losses." Some people simply choose to focus only on the agency's balance sheets.

What has been terribly missed out by our critics is that the NFA is a government corporation created not to earn profit.

The primary task of the NFA is to ensure food security for the people—especially in times of calamities or emergencies; and to stabilize rice supply and price.

How effective the NFA is in this task has been shown in Baguio City (after the 1991 earthquake when all roads to the city were rendered impassable by landslides) and, more recently, in Mindoro, Quezon and other far-flung parts of the country, like Batanes, Tawi-Tawi and Catanduanes (when those places were hit by calamities). Because the NFA had rice stocks in those areas, people there did not run out of rice supplies.

The NFA is able to keep rice stocks accessible to any part of the country by maintaining a buffer stock of about 400,000 metric tons (good for 15 days of national consumption) and storing this stock in strategically located warehouses across the country. The proximity of our stocks anywhere in the country makes us effective in providing quick response to emergencies and calamities.

The impact of the NFA's presence in areas hit by calamities—as told by victims and reported by the media—is the best justification for the NFA's continued existence.

Also, it cannot be denied that the NFA's market intervention effectively stabilized rice prices at a relatively lower level, allowing inflation rates to stay low. In fact, the increase in rice prices between 2001 and 2005 is lower than the inflation rates recorded during the same period. At the same time, the NFA, by subsidizing rice prices at farm-gate levels, ensures that farmers get a reasonable return from their produce.

Although the NFA is not responsible for increasing rice production, it also implements pro-farmer post-production and marketing programs to enhance farmers' profits.

The NFA is no different from other government agencies that are tasked to provide basic services to our people. Its only advantage as a government corporation is the flexibility in its financial transactions. When its budgetary allotment is delayed, the agency can borrow from banks to finance its operations. It can also use its revenues to effectively respond to emergency situations.

If the NFA were meant to earn profit, then its functions should be turned over to the private sector. However, the NFA is first and foremost a service-oriented agency. Its performance should be assessed not on the basis of whether it profited or lost from its operations, but on the basis of whether it has succeeded in its mandate on food security, and on supply and price stabilization.

—REX C. ESTOPEREZ,
director for public affairs,
National Food Authority,
101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City

A look at faces in Opinion page

"THE INQUIRER AT 20" MAGAZINE GAVE ME a chance to see some of the faces behind the only Philippine newspaper worth reading—in my opinion.

I turned to the "Opinion" gallery on Page 72 only to find columnists Michael Tan and Conrado de Quiros missing. Two favorite reads, I admit, without whose angst my day would be less than perfect.

Rina Jimenez-David was there, but I stopped taking her seriously the day she blessed the wearing of "I love my vagina" buttons on campus. The latest weapon of male destruction (WMD) in the War of the Roses designed (I guess) to bring men to their knees. But not necessarily to punish, I could be wrong.

Manuel L. Quezon III was there, too, but I stopped admiring his noblesse oblige the day he scolded Fox News political analyst Michelle Malkin for not crediting her Asian genes for her prosperity in mainstream America.

If anything, in my opinion, her "Miss Pilipinas looks" are a distracting non sequitur in the only world she knows—or wants to know—which, like millions of successful "transplants" before her have done, she has overcome with all-American true grit, and above all, class.

The Opinion editor, Jorge Aruta, was there, too. Now I know who looks at the zillions of "letters to the editor" without necessarily knowing why the vast majority of mine end up in File 13.

But for the dozen or so letters that have made the cut over the last few years, I remain truly honored and most grateful.

—ELLIOTT ANDERSON,
PO Box 2769, Ozamiz City 7200

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Aurora Catholic group's dorm burned

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THREE MEN BElieved to be government soldiers burned the women's dormitory of a Catholic church's training institute in Baler, Aurora on Christmas Day, reports received by the INQUIRER said.

Alfonso van Zijl, executive director of the Bataris (Bahay Talakayan para sa Rekonstruksyon at Ikauunlad ng Sambayanan) based in Barangay Buhangin, said the fire that broke out at about 4 a.m. destroyed the institute's wooden sleeping quarters and burned two motorcycles. He estimated the losses at almost P1 million.

Van Zijl, in a phone interview, said the suspects also poured gasoline on the main training center and men's dormitory but the fire that hit those facilities was put out by Bataris personnel, neighbors and firemen.

No one was inside the one-hectare compound during the fire as personnel went on a Christmas vacation, he said.

The Bureau of Fire Protection in Baler reported recovering an empty plastic container, a plastic bag and steel cutter at the compound.

Van Zijl said several witnesses saw the suspects and heard them tell each other "*Bilis, bilis* (Hurry, hurry)" before fleeing toward an alley at the back of the compound. The suspects left on board a tricycle.

"Clearly, this is arson in every sense and because of it, we lost an important facility. That makes this a sad Christmas for us at the institute," said Van Zijl, a Dutch lay missionary.

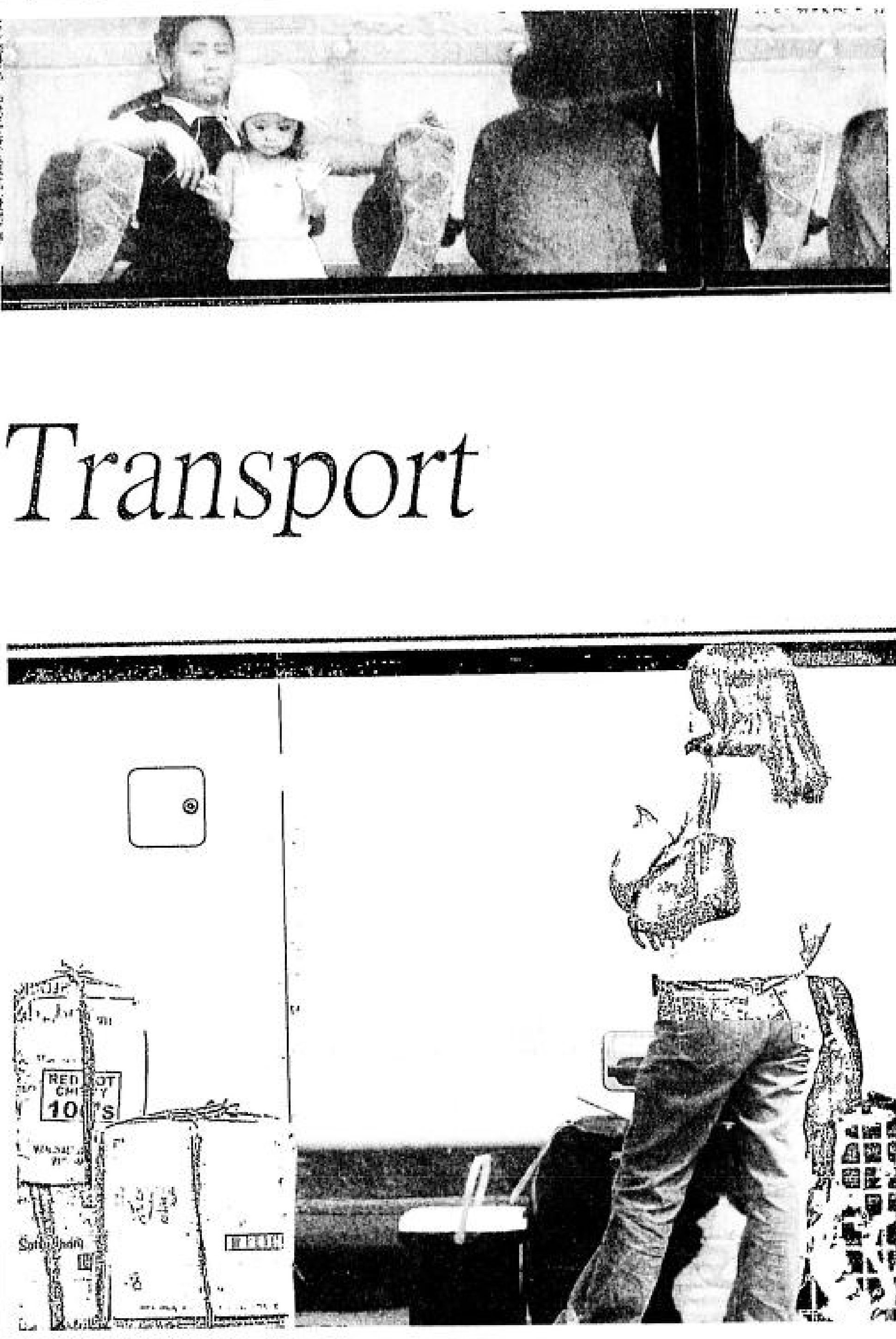
Founded in 1987, Bataris has served as an alternative learning center for lay people. Bishop Emeritus Julio Xavier Labayen of the Prelature of Infanta chairs the board of trustees.

Van Zijl said he suspected that members of the Army's 48th Infantry Battalion were behind the arson.

Lt. Col. Joselito Kakilala, 48th IB commander, said he was not aware of the fire.

"I will have the incident investigated," he said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

The incident came after the 48th IB, through streamers it put up in nearby San Luis town, tagged Bataris, the Justice and Peace Action Group, Multi-Sectoral Action Group and the party-list groups Bayan Muna and Anakpawis as "terrorists" and "fronts" of the New People's Army. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*



RUSH HOUR

RAFFY LERMA

A child looks out a window of a provincial bus at a woman waiting to get a ride home on Christmas Eve.

Floods send Marawi, Lanao folk fleeing

OZAMIZ CITY—FLOODS DUE TO continuous rains the past days have submerged lakeside villages in Marawi City and at least seven towns in Lanao del Sur.

Lawyer Bayan Balt, chair of the Ranao Claims Against Power Plants, said hundreds of residents have evacuated to higher grounds as floodwater continues to rise.

Balt said residents living near Lake Lanao in the towns of Taraka, Tamparan, Masiu, Ditsa-an, Ramain, Una Bayabao and Ubong have either moved to Madaris (Islamic schools) or relatives who live in higher grounds.

Aside from houses, also flooded were mosques which, traditionally, are located near water sources.

Balt's group has been opposing the operations of the National Power Corp.'s hydro power plants in Lanao.

Balt wants an investigation of the role of the dams in the flooding, raising the possibility that too much regulation of lake water flow prevents it from maintaining the desired level. *Ryan D. Rosauro, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Documentary says Poe a hero to Filipinos

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

POE'S widow, Susan, during the commemoration of his first death anniversary. PDI PHOTO

BAGUIO CITY—LIKE national hero Dr. Jose Rizal, former Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. and even Jesus Christ, the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. is an archetypal hero that most Filipinos will value as part of their culture.

This was one of the findings of an undergraduate thesis, presented in a video documentary format, by communication students of the University of the Philippines Baguio.

The 41-minute documentary, "Alamat ng Pagkabayani," explained why Poe rose as a "hero of the masses."

Poe's value as a cultural icon, the documentary said, would ensure that his name and relevance would endure among Filipinos.

The documentary gathered the views of communication and film teachers, filmmakers and psychologists to explain why Poe, in reel and real life, had made an impact in the life of the ordinary Filipino.

"It was timely to choose FPJ as our thesis subject because we saw in him the potential of being [categorized] as one of the archetypal heroes in contemporary times. We wanted to find out how his image as a hero was created considering that he was, figuratively, in every Filipino's heart," said Zig Dulay, one of the members of the group that produced the documentary. Its other members were Richelle Carr Cabrales, Marie Joy Gonzales and Jo Ann Papio.

The documentary opened by showing images of the political turmoil after the "Hello Garci" tapes surfaced in July this year.

It also showed Poe's widow, Susan Roces, criticizing President Macapagal-Arroyo for stealing the presidency "not once, but twice."

37 hurt in Christmas revelry in the Visayas

By PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—AT LEAST 37 PERsons were brought to different hospitals in Cebu, Iloilo and Leyte for blast injuries during the Christmas revelry.

But health and police authorities noted a decline in the number of cases this year and attributed this to the economic crisis and the government campaign against the use of firecrackers.

Thirty-five of these cases were reported in Cebu's four cities—Cebu, Lapulapu, Mandaue and Talisay. One blast victim was reported in Iloilo and another in Leyte.

An 11-year-old boy was also brought to the hospital in Mandaue after he was wounded by a stray bullet at about 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

Noel Gayo, staffer of the Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Unit (Rasu) of the Department of Health in Central Visayas, identified the victim as Jonever Arcipe.

He said they have no details yet on the boy's case, except that he was a resident of Barangay Ibabao in Mandaue and was hit by a bullet of unknown caliber.

When the Resu staff went to the Mandaue City Hospital, he added, the boy was still at the X-ray room.

Gayo said 35 blast victims were recorded in about 10 hospitals in the cities of Cebu, Talisay, Mandaue and Lapulapu.

He said the number was lower compared to last year's although it might go up once the other hospitals furnished them reports.

Last year, the DOH in Central Visayas received 38 cases of blast injuries from three cities in Cebu—Cebu, Mandaue and Lapulapu.

This year, the youngest victim was 8 and the oldest was 51. Most of them were hurt in the hands and were allowed to go home after receiving treatment from the different hospitals.

In Leyte, only one blast victim was brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center, the biggest government-run hospital in the region based in Tacloban City.

John Will Arpon, 10 and a resident of Barugo town in Leyte, was rushed to the EVRMC yesterday morning after firecrackers exploded near his right hand.

Physician Cristy Anne Saladaga told the INQUIRER that they had no other choice but to amputate his right hand because it was badly wounded.

Arpon was on this way to a convenience store in Barangay Minuhang, Barugo, about 7 a.m. yesterday when he saw a plastic bag containing several pieces of firecrackers.

He then took a stone and pounded it on the firecrackers, causing these to explode.

Dr. Adelaida Asperin, EVRMC chief of hospital, said the number of blast victims brought to the hospital reduced significantly.

"This could be the result of our intensified campaign against the use of firecrackers and I guess, (also) the economic difficulties we are facing," Asperin said.

Asperin said she hoped that fewer blast victims would be brought to their hospital during New Year. *Jhunnex Napallacan, Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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Guns swapped for holiday presents in California city

From page A1

A COMPTON resident turns over a hand gun to sheriffs in exchange for a $100 gift card. AP

The two were among dozens of gun-toting residents who converged on a shopping center parking lot on Saturday to anonymously swap firearms for gift certificates as part of a program aimed at reducing violence in this crime-plagued city.

Each was rewarded with a US$100 gift card for an electronics chain or a supermarket from the program's sponsors, including a supermarket chain.

In a line that snaked across the parking lot, participants carried guns in cardboard boxes, plastic grocery bags and fancy leather cases.

"The only reason you'd have these guns is to shoot at people," said sheriff's Deputy A.J. Rotella, who came up with the Gifts for Guns concept.

Rising criminality

Authorities created the program after a sharp spike in Compton's crime rate this year. Sixty-eight homicides have been recorded so far in 2005, up from 39 in 2004, according to sheriff's Capt. Eric Hamilton.

Over three consecutive Saturdays, sheriff's deputies amassed more than 250 firearms, including 185 handguns, 48 high-powered rifles, 15 sawed-off shotguns and a Tec-9 semiautomatic machine gun pistol.

"Hopefully and prayerfully, this will cut down on the shootings," said Compton resident Ruther Daniels, 44, who turned in a .22 cal. handgun.

All turned in weapons will undergo ballistics checks to determine if they were used in crimes before being melted down at the sheriff's annual "gun dump."

Authorities said the gun exchange might become an annual program. It was funded by the city of Compton, the Circuit City electronics store chain, Ralphs supermarket chain, and the Sheriff's Department through its sale of assets seized in drug cases. *AP*

Memories of purges haunt Reds

From page A1

demons and evil spirits.

Today, mention of Ahos casts a nervous chill among its top leaders.

The first question that NPA spokesperson Ka Roger Rosal asks before granting the INQUIRER an interview is, "Does it have something to do with Operation Ahos?"

That Rosal himself is drawn, or more aptly compelled, to explain what happened showed that the effects of the purges remained to be felt in the movement.

But Rosal claims otherwise. He says in an interview with the INQUIRER by phone that by 1997, the CPP had "already recovered" from one of its most "terrible mistakes."

The way he puts it, the purge has become ammunition for its enemies that is resurrected annually, usually during the CPP's anniversary.

"That has been resolved already. Those (who had sinned) were already punished," he says. "The people, the masses, when you humbly ask for their forgiveness, give it to you."

NPA resilience

Proof of the NPA's resilience, Rosal says, is that it is increasing its guerrilla fronts from 130 to 140 next year, the biggest ones in Southern Philippines. Each front has anywhere from 25 to 50 armed men, according to Rosal.

The party's ranks have also risen, now almost reaching the 100,000 mark. (The figures Rosal gives could not be independently verified.)

At its peak in the mid-1980s, the NPA strength was estimated at 25,000. Military estimates now put it at around 7,000.

Rosal admits that the damage inflicted by the purge—up to 1,000 persons were believed to have been killed, many buried in mass graves—was great.

Those who remained had to rectify the error and face the anger of families who had lost their loved ones.

Rosal assigns a large part of the blame on individual leaders, particularly the heads of the Mindanao Commission at the time, rather on the party leadership.

Ricardo Reyes, a former top CPP leader, says Ahos and other campaigns against deep penetration agents were "collectively affirmed, approved, reaffirmed and undertaken by the CPP leadership, national and regional, since 1981 until it almost wrecked the party in 1988."

"We suffered the consequences. Many left, many got afraid, many lay low. And some of those who understood simply walked away," Rosal says during the interview conducted alternately in English and Tagalog.

Movement splits

As a result of Ahos and other "mistakes" of the CPP, such as the boycotting of the 1986 snap elections, as well as differences over tactics and strategies, the communist movement split into two in the early 1990s.

Those who continued to support Sison were called Reaffirmists and those who rejected his leadership, the Rejectionists.

Rosal says that while NPA operations continue to be defensive rather than offensive, the insurgency movement today is strong and still attracts university students and graduates.

He says the movement continues to remain relevant more than a decade after the communist bloc in Europe collapsed and years after China, once a supporter of the CPP, decided to experiment with market economy.

ROSAL PDI PHOTO

"Our aims are no different from what they were three decades ago because the situation has not changed. From 1968 up to now, the (Philippines) remains to be semifeudal and semicolonial."

Francisco Nemenzo, a former president of the University of the Philippines, agrees that socialism will always be "relevant for as long as there is oppression in this world."

Globalization, for one, has proven to be a catastrophe to the Philippines, especially to its poor, says Nemenzo, who was a Politburo member of the old Marxist-Leninist Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, forerunner of Sison's CPP.

But it would be a mistake to equate revolution only with armed struggle, he says.

"There are other forms of expressing (a revolution)," Nemenzo tells the INQUIRER. Other Leftist groups are offering an alternative to going to the hills.

Even in the military, young officers are becoming more open, more observant and more critical of what is happening inside and outside the Armed Forces.

"Now with the ongoing political crisis, there is massive discontent in the Armed Forces, especially in the officer corps, particularly the more intelligent ones who studied in the PMA (Philippine Military Academy). You now have a phenomenon of young officers talking as if they are on the Left," he said.

One ranking military officer the INQUIRER regularly contacts often discusses the need to dismantle political dynasties, to replace the elite system of governance, and to implement real land reform, issues one usually hears from a leftist.

The world is seeing military organizations forming part of movements for social reforms, such as what is happening in Venezuela, according to Nemenzo.

"You can see it emerging in our midst," he adds.

Still another alternative to an armed struggle is "to escape," a path many Filipino students have taken. This means going abroad.

One challenge that the communist insurgency faces is how to attract these students "to the Maoist line," according to Nemenzo.

Still a romantic notion

Yet some do choose to stay and fight in the hills, fueled by their love of people and the romantic notion of being a freedom fighter.

One of them is "Cecilio," a middle-aged alternate member of a guerrilla front committee. He joined the NPA in 2002, leaving a daughter and a wife in Manila.

"When you see the kind of oppression and poverty going on in the countryside, you will understand why this kind of struggle is still necessary. I want to serve the people, and saw this as the best way to do it," he tells the INQUIRER.

GMA now stronger …

From page A1

resuming … peace negotiations and paving the way to basic national and democratic reforms and a just and lasting peace," it said.

The CPP statement said the united front had the potential of ousting Arroyo from power before the middle of 2006.

Bunye said the controversies and the political noise that ensued from the Hello Garci tapes had "almost sidetracked" Ms Arroyo's fiscal reform program.

He talked about the expanded value-added tax law that the administration pushed and the difficulty early on of convincing the people to support it. He said promoting VAT was like "selling a refrigerator to an Eskimo."

Tremendous rebound

With the implementation of the tax reform measure, Bunye said confidence in the country made a "tremendous rebound" and thus resulting with a stronger Philippine peso and stock exchange.

"In sum, 2005 is not just the year that President Arroyo survived her biggest political challenge. It was also the year when she restored the fiscal health of the country and turned the economy around," he said.

And with the fiscal reforms in place, Bunye said the Arroyo administration was now focusing on the next phase of her reforms. He said this involved bringing the benefits of VAT to the people through job creation, and providing better health, education and social services to the people.

Bunye said the government intended to invest 30 percent of the additional revenues from the VAT law in much-needed infrastructure, social service and reducing the budget deficit.

With these economic measures, he said the government was also focused in implementing political reforms by pushing for the amendment of the 1987 Constitution.

He said that the Palace-created Consultative Commission had already turned over to the President its recommendations to move the nation toward a federal-type parliamentary system. The proposals have been sent to Congress, which would make a final decision on the issues raised.

"Both from a governance and communications perspective, we are looking at 2006 as another exciting year," Bunye said.

In its anniversary statement, the CPP said the NPA rebels now operated in more than 100 guerrilla fronts scattered in about 750 municipalities out of 1,500 municipalities, with 75 to 120 full-time guerrilla fighters and high-powered rifles in each front.

According to the CPP, the NPA has launched more than 200 tactical offensives nationwide since Sept. 13 and inflicted hundreds of casualties against government forces and captured a significant number of high-powered rifles.

"By seizing the initiative and intensifying the tactical offensives, the Party and the NPA have confronted the long-running problem of conservatism: Always evading the enemy military forces, minding only the need to do mass work and not minding the need to carry out tactical offensives by way of advancing the armed revolution," said the CPP.

It said government forces had never been able to occupy more than 10 percent of the existing guerrilla fronts because of limited personnel and resources and because the people and revolutionary forces kept them blind and deaf.

Intensified attacks

"Thus, in at least 90 percent of the guerrilla fronts, the revolutionary forces are free to develop. Now, that the NPA seizes the initiative and intensifies tactical offensives nationwide, the enemy is dazed and bleeding from so many wounds," it said.

The CPP said that as long as Ms Arroyo remained in power, peace negotiations could not proceed to address the roots of the armed conflict and reach agreements on basic social, economic and political reforms.

The 10,000-strong NPA has been waging a guerrilla war in the countryside for 37 years.

The communist guerrilla group started on March 29, 1969 as rag-tag foot soldiers composed of 60 gunmen armed with nine automatic rifles and 26 single-shot rifles and handguns.

The rebels, who are on the US and European blacklist of terrorist organizations, suspended the Norwegian-brokered talks with the government last year, saying the discussions had done little to remove them from the lists.

The NPA decided to forego a Christmas ceasefire this year in protest over the military's alleged hand in the murders of left-wing activists and the government alleged insincerity in the peace talks.

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CHRISTMAS HABIT
Aeta women and their children beg at an intersection on Timog Avenue, Quezon City. The women say they always come to the city to beg during the holidays because people are kinder at this time of the year. RAFFY LERMA

QC soon garbage-free

By DJ Yap

COMING SOON: A CLEANER, TRASH-FREE city.

The Quezon City Council has passed an ordinance requiring developers or owners of subdivisions to provide space for composting facilities for waste generated by homeowners.

Under the ordinance, a materials recovery facility (MRF) shall be installed in residential communities to ensure the safe disposal of recyclable or biodegradable garbage.

In a related development, Councilor Jorge Banal Jr. has proposed authorizing the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD) to implement and enforce the ordinance.

According to Banal's proposed amendment to the original ordinance, subdivision owners or developers shall submit an operational plan for an MRF to the city engineer and health officer indicating the location, as well as the scope of the facility.

The result of the evaluation shall then be submitted to the EPWMD for final assessment and endorsement to the mayor for final approval.

Once an MRF is built in a subdivision, the owner or developer shall be required to submit monthly activity reports to the EPWMD regarding its operation.

Banal noted that it was within the powers of the EPWMD to enforce all laws on environmental management and pollution control.

In Makati, the local waste management office has asked residents to keep their garbage down to a minimum by practicing segregation.

"As much as possible, they should segregate. At least, they could also help increase the potential income of those collecting recyclables," said Gerlie Santos, consultant of Makati's Department of Environmental Services (DES). *With Tarra V. Quismundo*

Bloody Christmas

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TWO MEN WERE KILLED WHILE TWO POLICE officers were injured after what should have been a night of merrymaking ended in three bloody confrontations.

Painter Jesus Buenaventura, 31, died of several stab wounds after he was attacked by five men in front of his house in Barangay Addition Hills in Mandaluyong City at about 6:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Police later arrested suspects Elmer Lagajero, 38 and Claro Simborio, 27. Three others remain at large, police said.

Two police officers, on the other hand, were wounded after a man allegedly opened fire at them at about 2 a.m. Sunday.

Police said Senior Insp. Ernor Melgarejo and PO1 Rommel Jacillo had just come from a drinking spree in Barangay Tañong when suspect Gerry Nakita suddenly shot them, hitting them in the legs.

The policemen were later released after being treated in a hospital.

In Pasig City, Hector Gellado, 45, was stabbed dead by his drinking buddy Salvador Colete, 37, who also sustained several stab wounds.

METROBRIEFS

Ban on toy guns

TOY GUNS shooting plastic bullets has gotten the attention of a Quezon City councilor who finds them too violent for children's play. Councilor Elizabeth Delarmente has proposed a ban on plastic toy guns in the city to minimize the risks they pose to children, particularly young boys. She noted that the toys can be bought anywhere in the city, which could result in accidents or injuries, such as children getting hit by pellets in the eye. Delarmente wants not just to ban the sale of plastic guns and pellets in Quezon City, but also their manufacture and distribution. Violators face a fine of at least P5,000, or imprisonment for one to three months, or both, depending on the discretion of the court. *DJ Yap*

Series of protests

THE MANILA Public School Teachers Association (MPSTA) yesterday threatened to stage rallies to protest the planned relocation of two Binondo schools by the city government. "We will exert all efforts to stop the transfer of the Rajah Sulayman High School and Abad Santos High School to a new location. We will be holding a series of rallies to voice out our opposition to their plan," said Benjamin Balbuena, president of the MPSTA. The local government has said it will build a housing project on the schools' old site. But Balbuena claimed that city officials are just using the housing project as a "front." "We were able to gather information that they are planning to construct a mall, not a housing facility, in the area," he said. *Tina G. Santos*

More tax payment centers

AS IF to make up for the higher taxes it would exact on property owners next year, the Makati City government will be expanding its satellite real property tax payment system to cover more residents. Beginning next month, 13 barangay-based computerized payment centers will be opened to make it easier for residents in the city's 33 barangays to pay their real property tax. "We have now expanded the coverage of the electronic tax payment scheme. Previously, it was only the residents in the barangays who can avail of this service. Now, everyone can pay their taxes electronically and will no longer need to go to City Hall," said Mayor Jejomar Binay in a statement. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Appeal for help

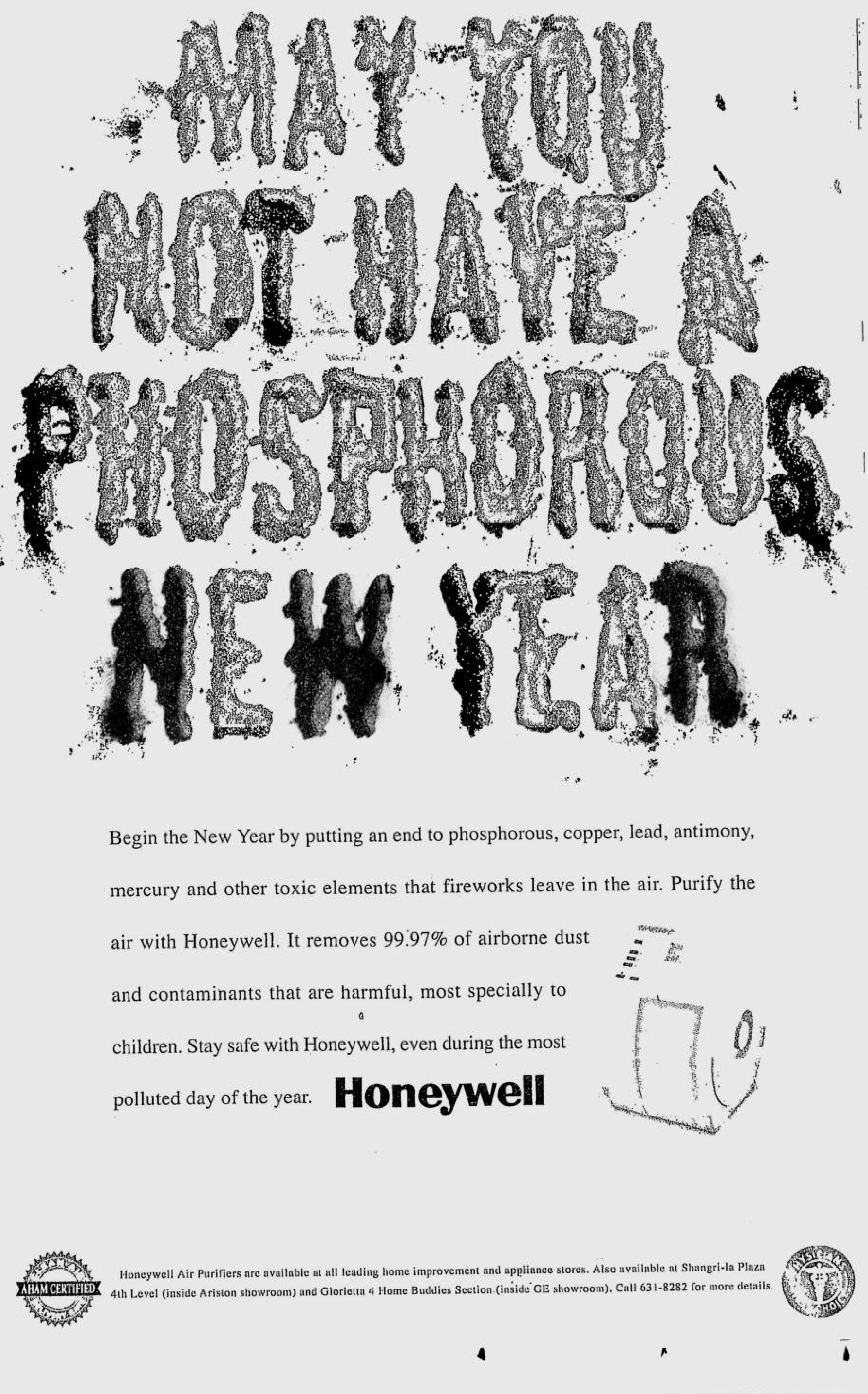
LAURA NICOLA "NIKKI" LAPUZ IS TOO young to know just how serious her condition is. She just turned 7 months old last Dec. 10.

Baby Nikki is afflicted with the Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome, a rare disease that keeps patients from breathing during sleep. The brain apparently fails to tell them they need to do this most elementary of human functions.

Nikki's father, Esmeraldo, and her mother are not about to give up on their first-born.

"We are determined to do whatever it takes for our daughter to have a chance to live," Esmeraldo said in a letter to the INQUIRER.

Your help will be most appreciated. Please contact Esmeraldo at 0916-7425066 or 0917-8579110. *Christian V. Esguerra*



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DURALITE SANDALS

Sa tibay, hindi basta-basta bumibigay.

Christmas is merry for Ginebra

Kings gain playoff with Barako for semifinal slot

JEFFREY Cariaso of Alaska rifles a shot from beyond the arc despite the outstretched defense of Ginebra's Mark Caguioa in last night's Christmas Day encounter. JESS YUSON

By June Navarro

RODNEY SANTOS BAILED BARANGAY GINEBRA OUT OF trouble with a three-pointer in the dying seconds as the Kings escaped with a 96-89 win over the Alaska Aces last night in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

With 28 ticks left, Santos nailed a triple from the right flank that sealed the Kings' ninth victory in 16 games and a playoff for an automatic semifinal slot.

"In the NBA (National Basketball Association), the (LA) Lakers have Robert Horry," said Barangay Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen. "Here, we have Rodney. He's a veteran, he's smart and most of all, he's willing to take those kind of shots when needed."

Though finishing the classification round in four-way tie with Red Bull, Talk 'N Text and Air21, the defending champion Kings forged a playoff with the Barako for the right to join Purefoods in the semifinals due to a superior quotient.

Mark Caguioa scored 18 of his 25 points in the second half, including 10 straight in a searing fourth-quarter run that dictated the tempo for the Kings the rest of the way.

"He (Caguioa) showed why many people love him," said Tanquingcen. "The Alaska import scored all right but Mark made him struggle for those points."

Odell Bradley came out of his shell with 34 points, 15 of them on three-pointers in the second half, for the Aces, who only went 10 times to the charity line and converted six free throws.

"I swear it was the free throws," said Alaska coach Tim Cone after the Aces finished the classification round in a tie with Sta. Lucia Realty at 7-9. The Aces will battle the Realtors in a best-of-three series in the wildcard round.

The Kings, who made 25 of 36 attempts from the free-throw line, tangle with the Barako on Jan. 4

The scores:

GINEBRA 96—Porter 29, Caguioa 25, Santos 18, Menk 8, Adducul 6, Helterbrand 5, Seigle 3, Macapagal 2, Holper 0, Salvacion 0, Dimaunahan 0.

ALASKA 89—Bradley 34, Allado 15, Dela Cruz 9, Cariaso 9, Hugnatan 6, Cablay 5, Alvarez 4, Cortez 4, Thoss 3, Franco 0, Padilla 0.

Quarters: 24-16, 40-35, 71-68, 96-89

Junior tennis tilt kicks off today

TWENTY-SEVEN SINGLES MATCHES kick-off the yearend 2005 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop starting at 9 a.m. today at the Philam Homes Tennis Club in Quezon City.

First round preliminary singles contests in the unisex 10-under, boys' 12-under and boys' 14-under divisions will be played in the age group tourney which attracted over 150 junior netters from all over the country.

Meanwhile, tournament referee Rene Selmar said Dec. 27 is the deadline for registration in the doubles event.

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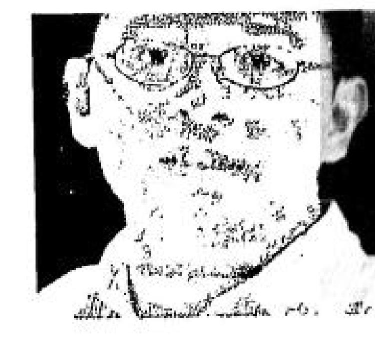

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BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

(LOVE: It's the day after Christmas, but to all the kind souls who again made us experience the true essence of Christ's birth, through prayers, text messages, gifts, kind thoughts, greetings, etc., I and my whole family send our loving gratitude. Thanks in particular to Bogey Santos, Nandy Charvet, Dr. Ruel Reyes of San Pablo City, Ramon Rivero, Mar Maralit, Gerry Mayor, Barts Mayo, Porong Cruz and gang in Sta. Maria, Bulacan for again supporting tomorrow's annual gift-giving for farm and poultry kids in Pangao, Lipa City. Peace.)

***

IT WAS A LOT EASIER SAYING SOMEthing nice about Jose Miguel Arroyo until his daughter, Luli, issued a strong family statement at the Hong Kong Disneyland last week.

No, Ms Luli cried, short of shooing away a media person who had requested for a brief interview with her famous father.

You can bet it was not a simple "No" the world heard because sports columnist Beth Celis, on the receiving end of Ms Luli's displeasure, claimed it felt as though a slap had cracked in her face. She could not get over the hurt until yesterday.

Ms Celis was among the 30-strong media group herded by the First Gentleman to the HK Disneyland, as part of the Palace treat for the Filipino gold medalists in the last Southeast Asian Games.

***

"I heard so many good things about the First Gentleman that I thought I'd get a few words from him," reported Celis in her column last Saturday. "But before he could say anything, the small girl seated to his left answered: No!"

Celis said she thought the girl was joking.

She repeated her request.

"No! We're on vacation. I hope you can respect that," Celis quoted Ms Luli as crying with a lot of *taray* to spare.

Celis said she would have readily respected the rejection if it were done in a humane manner.

The display of nasty temper by the presidential daughter also caused a lot of tongue-clucking.

The way Celis would react, Ms Luli had not only manifested a disgust of media, she also displayed a dirty disdain for the small fry.

"I was so taken aback and, I guess, so was FG," wrote Celis, "who made some facial signs which I took to mean everything was okay with him, that he could be interviewed, maybe later."

***

It was both strange and shocking.

In fact, this reporter had to double-check with Celis on the incident.

"I've been in media for over 30 years, but it was only now that I had encountered someone so rude," Celis explained yesterday.

Marc Reyes, the INQUIRER man assigned to the Hong Kong treat, said he could not believe what he was seeing and hearing.

Indeed, it was hard to imagine that it was the sweet, simple presidential daughter stealing the thunder from the gold medalists. And right there in Disneyland, a monument to innocence.

Yes, Ms Luli had loomed to this reporter as one perfect model for someone truly innocent of political power.

After Imee Marcos had once quipped she would be more like a nun compared with Kris Aquino, Luli Arroyo had next gone on to be pictured (quite kindly by the media) as the best thing that ever happened to this creature called a presidential daughter.

Naturally, Beth Celis had every reason to believe Luli Arroyo was merely kidding in rejecting her rudely.

This reporter, who himself had started to become a fan of Luli Arroyo, could not believe the Celis claim at first.

Tell me it was not true, we begged her.

The reply: a daughter is supposed to get the finest trait of her mother, but Ms Luli had done her mom a lot better in making a family statement.

Merry Christmas, just the same.

Record TD heightens Colts' grief

SEATTLE—SHAUN ALEXANDER RAN FOR 139 yards and scored three touchdowns, including a rare TD receiving, to tie Priest Holmes' NFL record of 27 touchdowns in a season. That helped the Seahawks clinch NFC home-field advantage Saturday with a 28-13 victory over the injured, resting and reflective Indianapolis Colts.

The Colts, who already own home field in the AFC playoffs, were without coach Tony Dungy. Dungy is in Tampa, Fla., where his son died Thursday in an apparent suicide.

The Seahawks' 11th straight victory came against a depleted Indianapolis team without Pro Bowlers Marvin Harrison, Cato June and Bob Sanders—and with Pro Bowl quarterback Peyton Manning playing just one quarter.

Indy also rested Pro Bowl defensive end Dwight Freeney. He was not listed on the injury report, but did not start and played little.

The Seahawks (13-2) also set a franchise record for wins in a season.

Meanwhile, the Colts (13-2) set off for Tampa, Fla., to rejoin Dungy for Tuesday's funeral. Their coach has been there since Thursday, hours after his 18-year-old son James was found dead. First-year assistant head coach Jim Caldwell is filling in for Dungy indefinitely.

Redskins 35, Giants 20

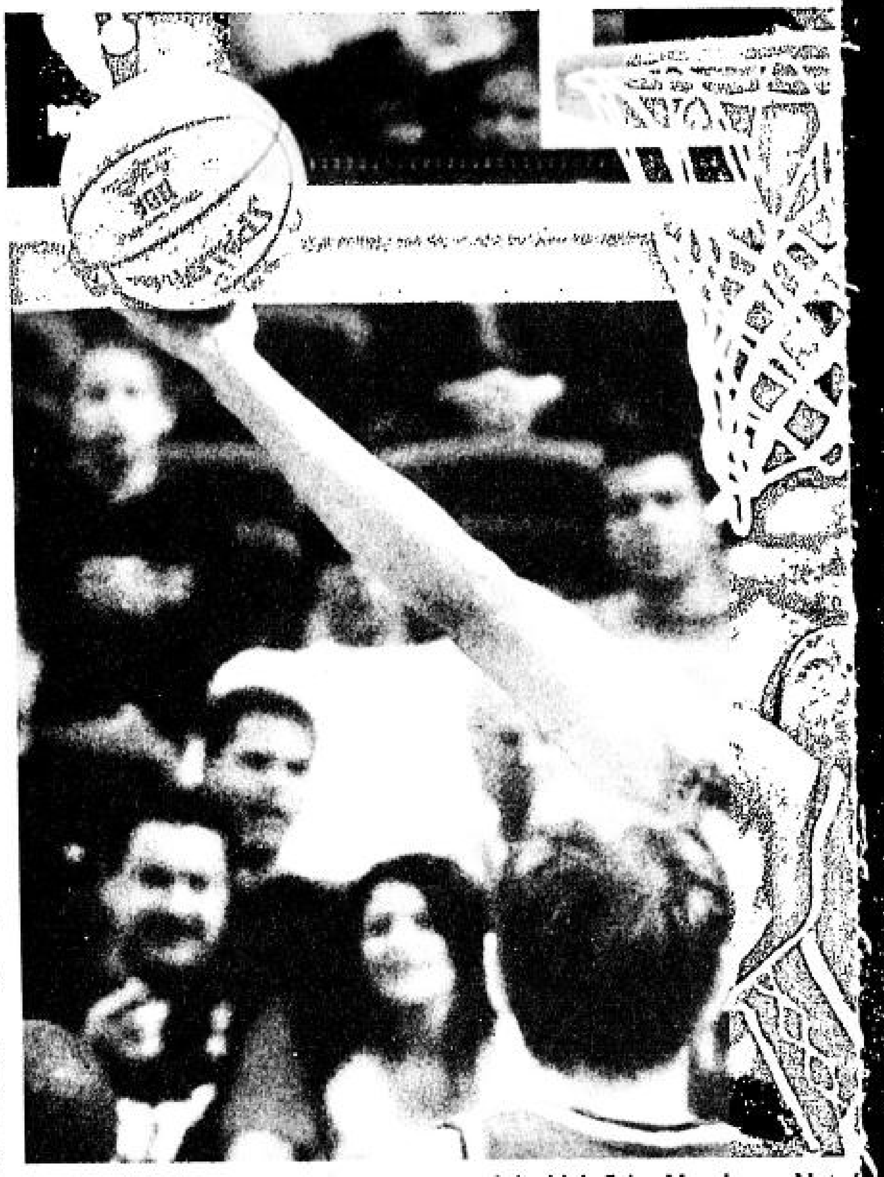
At Landover, Md., Santana Moss caught three touchdown passes and Clinton Portis ran for one score and threw for another in a victory that kept Washington on pace for its first playoff berth in six years.

The Redskins (9-6) have won four straight and will clinch at least a wild-card berth if they win at Philadelphia in next week's regular-season finale. They will win the NFC East with a win and a Giants loss at Oakland next week.

Despite the loss, the Giants (10-5) will secure a playoff berth if Minnesota loses against Baltimore on Sunday night. They will win the NFC East with a win against the Raiders.

The Redskins were leading 21-17 when quarterback Mark Brunell left the game with a sprained knee after being sacked by Nick Greisen on the first series of the second half.

Patrick Ramsey, who was benched after getting hurt in the season opener, entered on the next series and had a sputtering start. *AP*



THE MIAMI Heat ignored Vince Carter, and the high-flying New Jersey Nets f

SPORTSWATCH

PBFI holds refs' seminar

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL FEDERATION INC. (PBFI), led by Mauricio "Moying" Martelino, is holding a Referees Accreditation and Seminar on Dec. 27-28 at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum. The project, being organized by PBFI vice president Nic Jorge of the Best Center fame, aims to draw a good number of referees from the National Capital Region and the nearby provinces to follow up on the success of earlier accreditation and seminars held in Dipolog, Bicol, Zamboanga, Baguio and Cagayan de Oro. Past accreditation and seminar events organized by Jorge drew no less than 150 referees in most regions with the Bicol referees coming in full force of more than 500.

Makati 6-cocker resumes

TOUGH AND EXCITING FIGHTS ARE EXPECTED TODAY when the blockbuster Pamaskong Salpukan 6-cock derby resumes at the fully air-condit
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day's championship round. A
jackpot prize of P3 million. Th
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Huling Hirit da

THE HULING HIRIT BISIG
ending tournament of dart
held in partnership with the
28 at 8 p.m. at the Pearl Pla
Among the supporters are
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Beer, Cozy Nook Baguio Cit
Odulio, Larry Memije, Togs
Tanny Gonzales, Rolly Sac
Oceanwide Crew Manila. T
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orward made them pay for it.

REUTERS

Lakers, Heat get to Xmas game on different roads

MIAMI—THE LOS ANGELES Lakers ignored the hype. The Miami Heat can only wish Vince Carter did the same.

There were 14 games in the NBA on Friday night, but most of the talk in Florida was about one that doesn't come until Sunday: the Lakers-Heat matchup that brings the next chapter in the Kobe Bryant-Shaquille O'Neal rivalry.

Carter was listening, and didn't like what he heard.

Then he went out and tied a career high with 51 points, scoring 37 in the second half, as the New Jersey Nets extended their season-high winning streak to five games with a 95-88 victory over the Heat.

"All day I've been watching TV and they were mentioning the Christmas Day game without mentioning they had a game tonight, or to watch the Nets," Carter said. "We're just trying to earn respect."

There were other impressive performances Friday—Allen Iverson scored 53 points, Washington's Gilbert Arenas had 41 and the Clippers' Elton Brand had 38 points and 20 rebounds—but Carter's stood out while coming against one of the league's best teams.

"Basically, one guy beat us. Vince was unbelievable," Heat coach Pat Riley said.

Riley's coaching matchup against Phil Jackson is another subplot of Sunday's second game, which follows the NBA Finals rematch between the Pistons and the Spurs. And while Jackson knows he has to talk about Sunday's game, he knew his biggest responsibility was keeping his team's attention on Friday's.

"This trip, you've got to do a lot of PR work for the league, pump up that Miami game on Christmas Day because they're asking you to do this all the time," Jackson said. "And don't forget, Orlando is just as important in the win-loss column."

The Lakers got the win as Kobe Bryant had 21 points and nine assists, and Chris Mihm scored 20 points in a 104-88 victory.

Playing for the first time since Bryant scored a career-high 62 points in a victory over Dallas, the Lakers relied on a much more balanced effort in Orlando. All five starters scored in double figures.

"I was worried about this game because everybody is talking about and looking forward to the Christmas game," Mihm said. "This is an easy one to overlook and let slip, but we came out and took care of business."

In Miami, Carter was 13-for-25 from the floor and 23-for-24 from the foul line, easily eclipsing his previous season-best of 38 points against Cleveland on Dec. 9. He's averaging 35.4 points on 49 percent shooting during the Nets' winning streak.

O'Neal had 24 points and 14 rebounds for Miami, but Dwyane Wade will need a much better performance Sunday against Bryant. He scored 17 points—on only 4-for-20 shooting—and was repeatedly beaten on defense by Carter.

"I take the blame for it," Wade said. "I did a bad job on him." *AP*

NBA on Solar

Catch the reunion of one of the most explosive duos ever seen in the NBA when the Miami Heat host the Los Angeles Lakers today. Solar Sports will bring the Christmas Day duel starting 9 a.m. Shaquille O'Neal of the Heat and Kobe Bryant of the Lakers powered Los Angeles to three straight championships from 2000 to 2002.

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ARTERS, THE SEASON-
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Helping salvage soccer in a tsunami-hit region

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA—A MAZE OF drainage ditches, water pipes and mounds of dirt crisscross the pitch at Banda Aceh's Lampineung Stadium, home of the Persiraja football club. The stands are mostly stacks of warped boards, which dozens of construction workers are removing in preparation for a major renovation.

Soccer's international governing body (Fifa) and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) are financing repairs to the facilities in preparation for the team's return to the Indonesian 1st Division for the first time since last year's undersea quake, tsunami and subsequent relief operations devastated the site.

"We have to thank Fifa for helping us in our time of need," said Burhanudin Amin, a Persiraja official supervising the works on the monsoon-drenched stadium. "Without them, this club would have died in the tsunami."

The 15,000-seat Lampineung Stadium was badly damaged by the earthquake that struck a year ago on Dec. 26. The huge wave that spread across the provincial capital also washed over the field, leaving only the forlorn-looking goalposts standing.

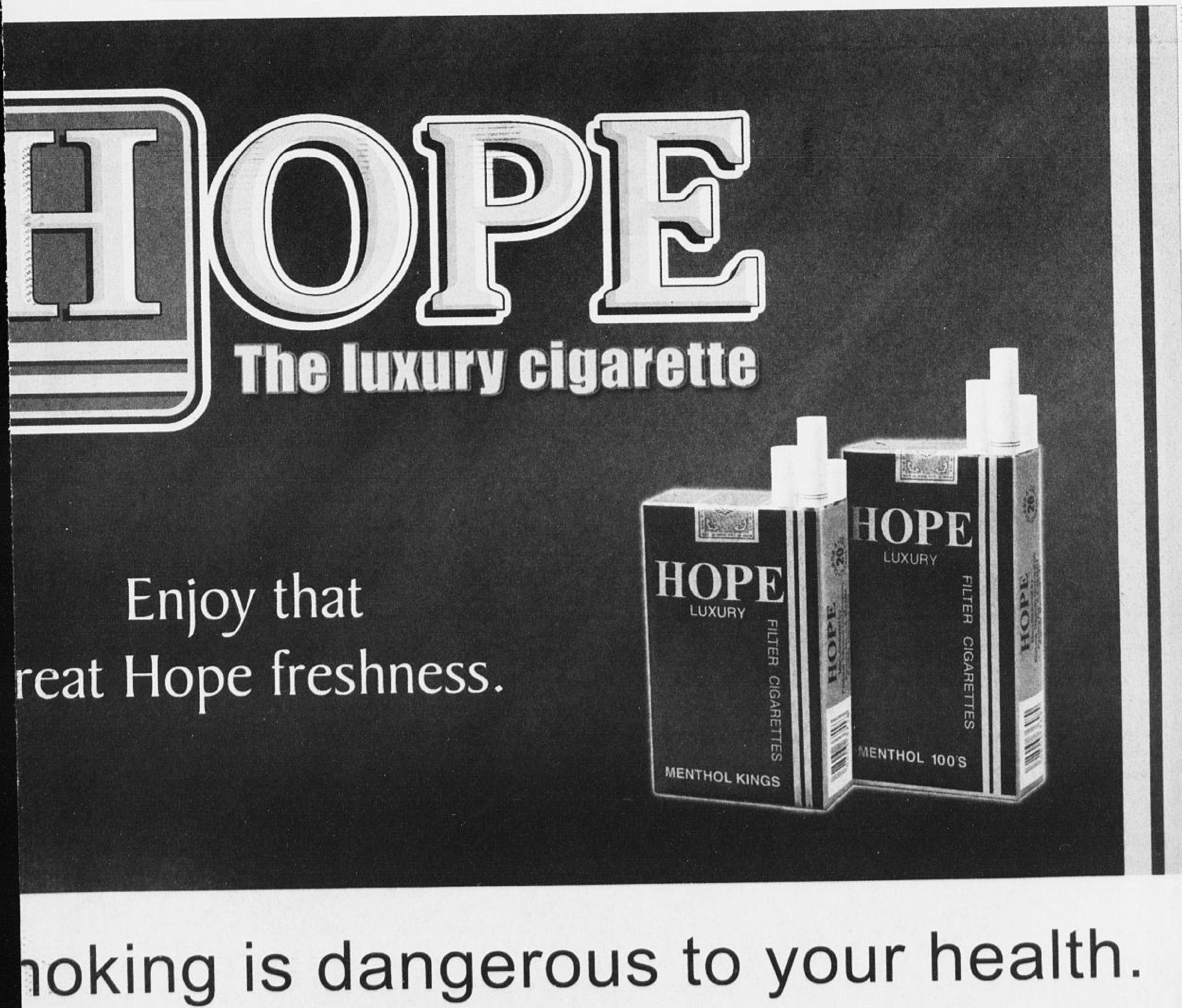
Spanish and other foreign troops, who arrived a few days later with heavy equipment to help with rescue and relief operations, further damaged the site. They bivouacked at the stadium, setting up makeshift warehouses for humanitarian supplies on the pitch.

As the rescue effort gradually wound down, Fifa and the AFC launched a $10.5-million Tsunami Solidarity Fund for soccer infrastructure reconstruction in areas affected by the tsunami. This included financing for numerous projects in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Thailand, where a Tsunami Memorial Football Center will be built.

In the Maldives, relief financing was directed into repairs to the damaged headquarters of the national soccer body and its training center, while in Sri Lanka 13 separate reconstruction projects were funded.

Much of the money in Aceh was spent on donations of soccer equipment for the many traumatized children, as sport and play was considered essential to help their recovery. Fifa and the AFC also sent delegates to set in motion coaching and refereeing courses, and soccer clinics for homeless kids as well as local tournaments were set up.

Still, there has not been a single official match in Aceh since the tsunami, and the three teams that used to play in Indonesia's 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions are hoping to return to national competitions when they resume in February. *AP*



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RP chessers ready for Singapore Int'l Open

SINGAPORE—A 15-STRONG PHILIPpine chess team led by Grandmaster Mark Paragua arrived here yesterday primed and ready to do well in the Singapore Masters International Open championship at the Singapore Intellectual Games Centre in the Bishan Community Club.

The nine-round Swiss system tournament that will feature six other GMs including European champion Zurab Azmaiparashvili of Georgia (ELO 2658) gets off the ground after the traditional ceremonial moves at 9 a.m. today.

Surigao Del Sur Congressman Prospero "Butch" Pichay is bankrolling the RP stint here which comes on the heels of the country's gold medal shutout in the last Southeast Asian Games.

With Wilfredo "Willie" Abalos as delegation head, the RP squad is also made up of NCFP ambassador and chair of countryside development Dr. Jenny Mayor, former Asian junior champion GM Nelson Mariano II, GM candidate Jayson Gonzales, IM Richard Bitoon, Oliver Dimakiling, 12-year-old whiz kid Wesley So, 2004 National Open champion Darwin Laylo, NM Almario Marlon Bernardino Jr., Dr. Alfredo Paez, Rodolfo Panopio Jr., Jan Vincent Paragua, Ramon Manon-Og and Michael Adarlo.

Tournament organizer is Ignatius Leong, World Chess Federation (FIDE) vice president for Asia.

Pichay, who sponsored the recent 2200-and-below team tournament at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Quezon City which offered a total pot prize of P500,000, is seeking the National Chess Federation of the Philippines presidency which Go Teng Kok, also the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association president, gave up early this month.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

DOWN BUT NOT OUT: Despite getting knocked down in the second round, Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista came back to decision Mexican Guillermo Espinoza in California Saturday.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FIGHT NEWS

Para athletes cry foul

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

GIVEN THEIR VASTLY IMPROVED performance at the just-ended 3rd Asean Para Games, Filipino athletes with disabilities who won more than 20 gold medals (from a measly two in Vietnam in 2003) should be treated more kindly by providing them with hefty rewards just like what First Gentleman Mike Arroyo did to the champions of the recent 23rd SEA Games.

Over the years and, for the sake of equity and fairness, I have been writing about the need to provide the Filipino differently abled athletes with a permanent compensation law similar to Republic Act 9064 which grants cash incentives and other benefits to normal athletes who win medals in the Olympics, Asian and Southeast Asian Games. Sadly, my pleas have remained largely unheeded.

In my view, these athletes with disabilities train just as hard and seriously as normal and able-bodied athletes and should be rewarded for a job well done. I've gone to some of these Para Games and I have never stopped to wonder at the athletes' true grit and exceptional skills to push the limits of human endurance.

That is why I was disheartened to know that supposedly well-meaning organizers of the 3rd Asean Para Games like Mike Barredo, a former PSC commissioner and a certain Mr. Penson, reportedly neglected our physically handicapped entries by failing to provide them with some of their basic needs such as competition shoes, bags, uniforms, competition equipment and, yes, their allowances.

As athletics double gold medal winner Isidro Vildosola said: "*Mabuti pa nga po 'yung mga normal na atleta sa* SEA Games, *sila mayroong* trip *sa* Hong Kong (Disneyland), *samantalang kami, kahit* trip *sa* Baguio *wala* (Those normal athletes who competed in the SEA Games are a lot luckier because they were given a trip to Hong Kong (Disneyland), while we got nothing, not even a trip to Baguio.)"

"I even had to ask a friend to lend me a pair of shoes," said table tennis two-gold medal winner Minnie Ramos.

Veteran internationalist Adeline Dumapong, the 32-year-old wheelchair-bound powerlifter, who reset the Asean record in retaining her title, said she hoped the winning Filipino athletes with disabilities would also receive the same treatment from the First Gentleman. "I hope the First Gentleman will also give us the same attention."

In retaining this year's Asean powerlifting title, Dumapong, a bronze medal winner at the 2000 Sydney Paralympics and a gold medalist at the 2003 Vietnam Para Games, pressed the iron bar to a new meet record of 117.5 kilos, surpassing the old mark of 107 kg.

According to some Para Games athletes, they even had to borrow competition shoes from their friends and make do with only one set of uniform during the weeklong meet. They stressed that their situation was truly pathetic because they had been virtually ignored and neglected even though they gave their best for flag and country.

Still, there are cash incentives awaiting the Para Games medal winners, according to lawyer Guillermo Iroy, the Philippine Sports Commission executive director. But I say this will not suffice. What is needed is a law (similar to RA 9064) that will give the medal winners of the Para Games permanent cash incentives and not handouts from the PSC or the FG Foundation.

***

YENG GUIAO IS AN ENIGMA. Red Bull isn't there yet, but the team is definitely in the running for a crack at this year's PBA Fiesta Conference championship. With head coach Yeng Guiao, the Barakos are making a run for the second berth in the semifinals. The Purefoods Chunkee Giants earlier earned the first slot. But to make it into the next round, the 45-year-old Guiao needs to correct some deficiencies.

It's about time he stop fussing around and commit himself to fielding a solid starting five. He should not experiment with the Red Bull lineup but field instead the right player at the right time. In addition, he should not forget to sue for time the moment the opposition has gained momentum and not when his opponents have already taken a huge lead.

There is no doubt that Guiao has done a commendable job given what he had to work with since joining the Photokina franchise in 2000. But for him to go anywhere at all, he needs to win another PBA title for the Barako, who last won a league championship way back in 2001.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Monday, December 26, 2005

ALL NEW SEASON
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TUESDAY

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		Speed		TNA Impact		Sentro	Friends	Guinness Book Of Record		Fear Factor		Big News	The Apprentice		Totoo TV	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Pinoy Game KNB?	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Pinoy Big Brother	OK Fine! Whatever			Insider
AXN		SWAT Police			Maximum Exposure (Season II)		E Buzz	PSI Factor (Season III)		24		The 4400		Numb3rs (Season I)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Machine Robo Rescue	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Bato-Bato Sa Langit				Kahit Kailan				Kuya				Mano Po 2				Palaban	
Cinemax	Mistrial			Weekend War			It Could Happen To You			Two Weeks Notice (7:15 PM)				Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story				Nowhere To Run	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	Living Golf	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Body Works		Ancient Clues		Mythbusters 3		Tribal Odyssey		Unsolved History				Wild Discovery		Extreme Machines		Titanic: Birth Of A Legend	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Unlikely Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			So Little Time		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Winter X Games Classik		Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	Table Tennis '05 Killerspin	Motorsport Asia	TNA Impact		2005 WPBA Cuetec Cues Nat'l 9-BALL C'ship		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Complete Savages	Knock First	Today Weekend		Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Friends	Will & Grace	The O.C.		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		ET Weekend		For Love Or Money	
EWTN	Benediction And Devotion Encore	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Bible Treasure Chest	Image Of God	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Voices On Virtue	EWTN Gallery	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Sunday Night With (Encore) Fr. Benedict Groeschel		Threshold Of Hope		Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	Defending Life	Catholic Compass	
Fox News		Fox Report Sunday		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends				Fox News Live					
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace/Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita			Saksi		
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Wife Swap III		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Who's The Boss	Bewitched IV	The Nanny III	Changi		Wife Swap III		To The Ends Of The Earth			McLeod's Daughters IV		Wire In The Blood
HBO			Top Gun (3:45PM)				Peter Pan (5:45 PM)				Highwaymen (7:15 PM)			Thunderbirds			The Calcium Kid (10:35PM)		
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen		Home Shopping Network		ME TV					IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		South Park	Street Smarts	Wwe Heat		WWE Velocity		Cheat	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		Sweet Spot	Comedy Central Presents	Comedy Central Presents	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Blue Collar TV	Banzai	Joe Schmo Show	
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Food 911	101 Most Awesome Moments		NY Fashion Week	Life & Style		Living Space	Style Star	Breathing Room	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines	Rockola	MTV Ask	Chart Attack		Viva La Bam	Pop Inc.		MTV Hits				Massive	Get Spotted	TRL		The 70's House	Wild N' Out	Homecoming	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten			Mobile MYX Top Picks	Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Dangerous Encounters		Bug Attack		Snake Wranglers	Totally Wild	Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Dangerous Encounters		Wild Sex, Demands/Macho Males/Femme Fatales/Swingers	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Dial M		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues/What Planet Are You From	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot/Right On Top	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Nancy Zuniga Concert				Ibing Mo Man Ang Puso				Rocky & Rolly				Sa Kabila Ng Lahat				Sarangani
Qtv		Endless Christmas (Natividad Sin Fin)	Striker Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Star	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	H3O Hahaha...Over!		News On Q	Lipa Ng Kababaihan		Groupee TV	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Scare Tactics	NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Simple Life 2	Cerge For Truth	
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Kalakalan		Sony Bmg Video			
Solar Sports		WTA 2005 Gaz de France Stars Belgium					JVC Interscholastic			Sagupaan		Sportsdesk		NBA Game Lakers @ Heat					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus			2005 PGA Tour Year in Review		Golf Globe 2003	Ultimate Fighting Championship				NFL 2005 Giants @ Washington						ADT Golf Skills Chall. Day2			
Star Movies	Aliens (2:45PM)					Finding Forrester				Down With Love (7:15 PM)				Belly Of The Beast			Rapid Fire		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	Married To The Kellys	Everybody Loves Raymond	King Of Queens	Becker	Monk		Friends	Married To The Kellys
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster						Get Backers	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Swan Season 2		Tru Calling (8:20 PM)	Charmed (9:10 PM)		News Central	The West Wing		Travel Time

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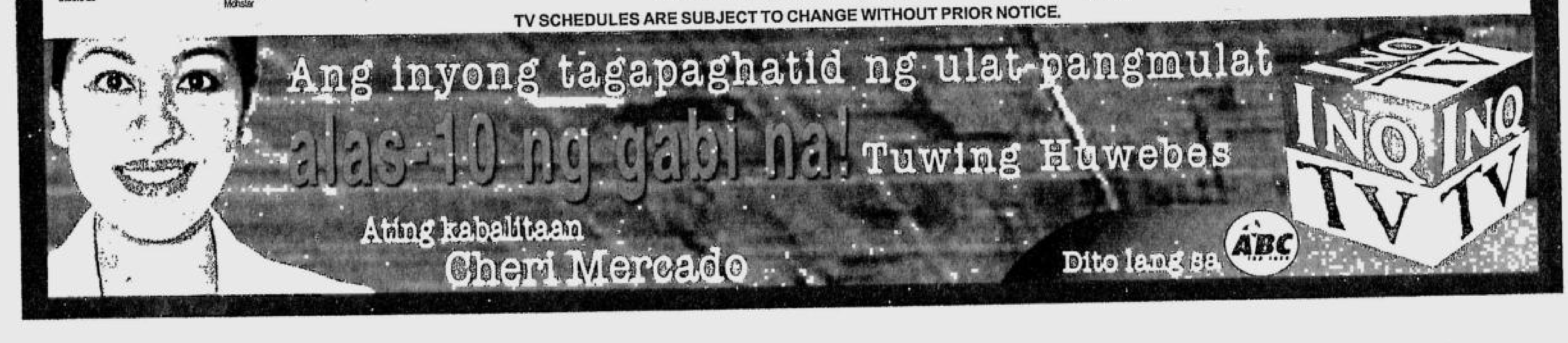

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

How young female stars fared in '05

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LAST SATURDAY, WE EVALUATED young male stars' showing in 2005, pointing out both gains and losses, and what they could do to make 2006 a better year for their careers. Today, let's do a comparative survey of young female stars' careers this year:

Judy Ann Santos and **Claudine Barretto** maintained their status as veteran TV-film faves, despite younger starlets' efforts to dislodge them, or at least erode their advantage.

Judy Ann has a movie with **Piolo Pascual** coming up next month. If it clicks, it would further shore up her stellar ascendancy.

For her part, **Jolina Magdangal** was very busy on television, but she really needs to do a new movie next year to catch up with her two stellar contemporaries.

Among the young comers angling for the front ranks are **Angel Locsin** and **Jennylyn Mercado.**

Angels is flying high on TV's "Darna" and the film, "Mulawin, The Movie."

Jennylyn is similarly a TV-film presence, but her last movie was an acting debacle for her, so she has some making up and catching up to do.

Also coming on strong are **Francine Prieto** and **Iza Calzado**, two of the loveliest faces on the small and big screens. In fact, they're the most beautiful cast members in the new GMA-7 telenovela, "Etheria," where they make some female starlets in the series look like scullery maids.

Aside from beauty, Francine has a sensitivity and expanding performance range that should serve her well in the years to come. Yes, she can continue to do sexy roles, but as her TV stints show, she can also have a busy career as a comedienne and dramatic actress.

Francine is so outstanding that we can even see her succeeding in show biz abroad. Trouble is, she's so busy here that she can't take a long breather away from her commitments to try her luck internationally just yet.

Among the young actresses, it's **Angelica Panganiban** who's being recognized for her acting talent, thanks to "Santa Santita."

Recently, however, she's been involved in petty squabbles that have distracted viewers from her thespic ability. We trust that she can reestablish her career's proper focus—soonest.

Among the starlets "rediscovered" by digital movies this year, the standout is **Jaycee Parker**, who really came into her own in "Ilusyon."

Jaycee was more than just a bold

HOW/ A2-3

JUDY ANN Santos still on the A-list

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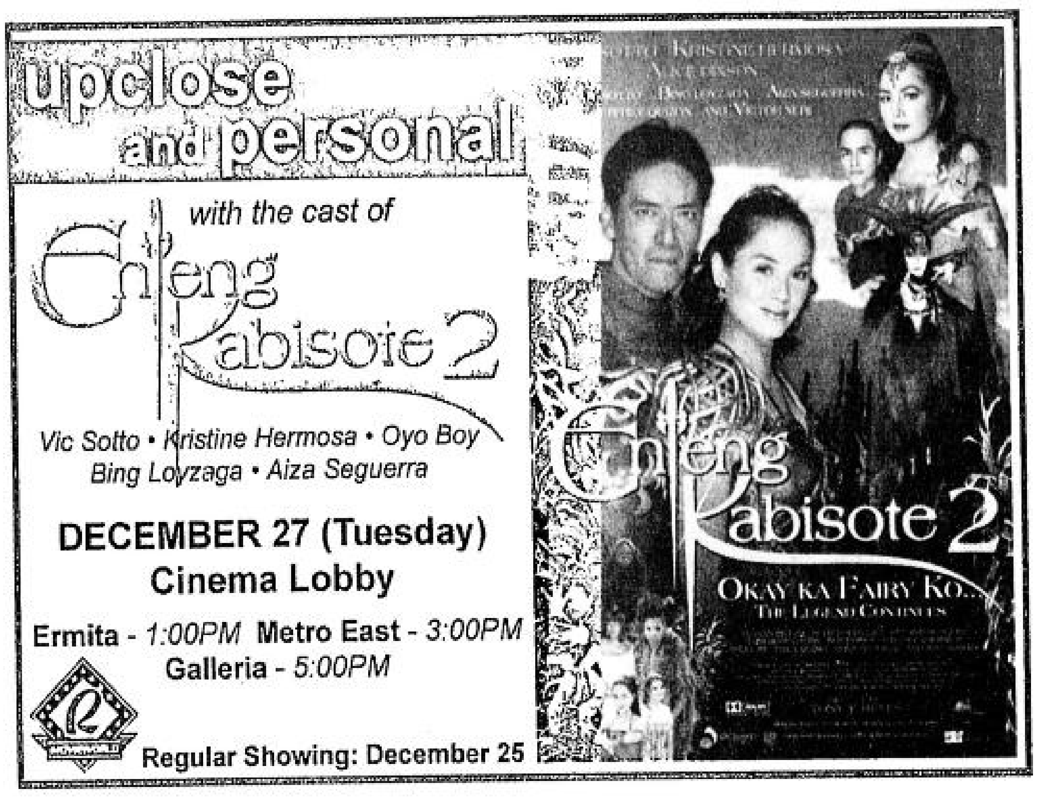
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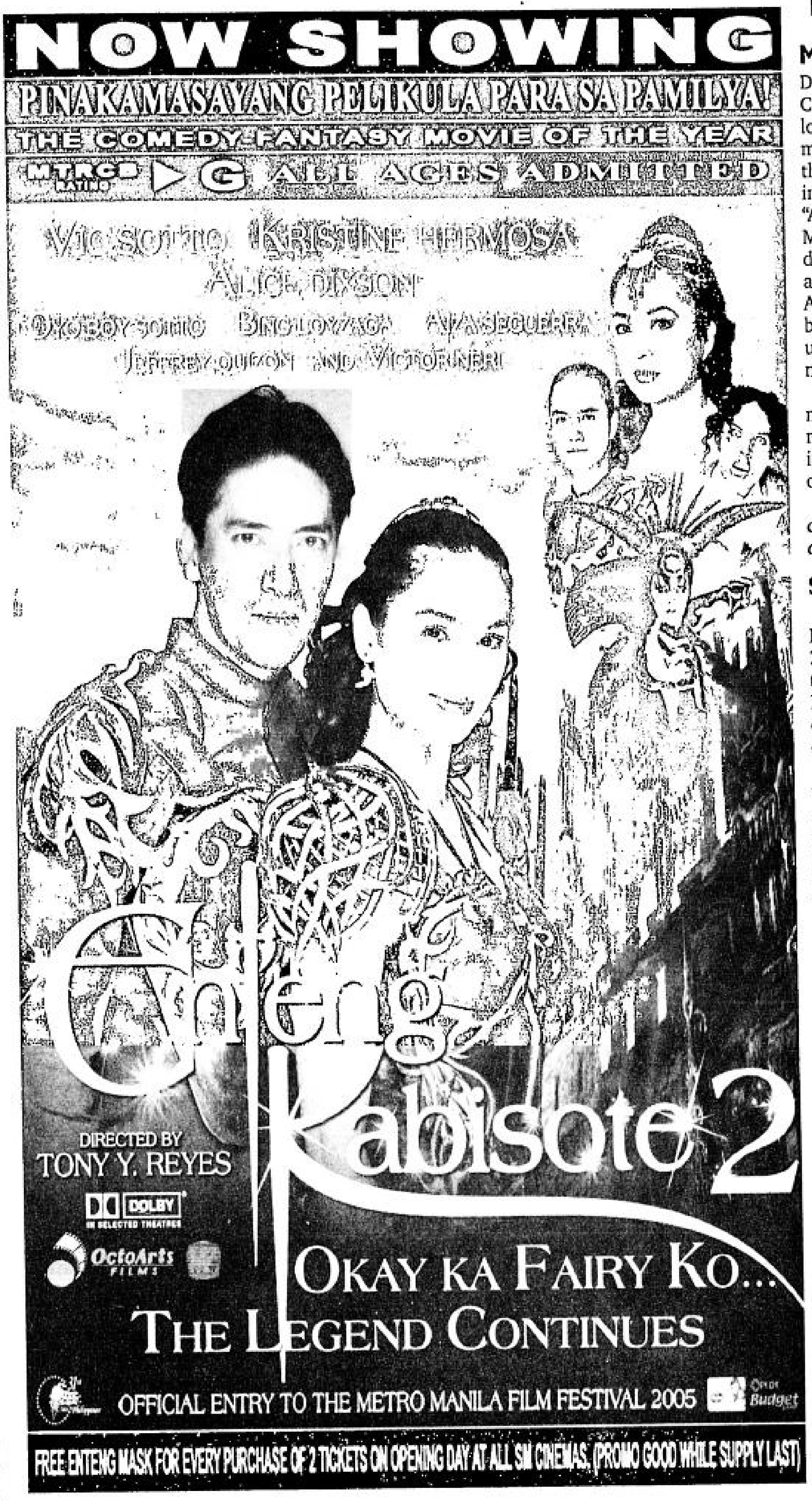
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ROUNDUP

Maxi vs Kong

DAVAO CITY—"KING Kong" lorded it over cinemas last week, but the award-winning independent film, "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros," drew large audiences as well, according to Amor Olaguer, distribution assistant of ufo Pictures, "Maximo" producer.

Olaguer said the movie's good performance shows "there is still hope for the local film industry."

Germelina A. Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Single again

LOS ANGELES—Actress Renee Zellweger's marriage to country crooner Kenny Chesney never existed, at least in the eyes of the law.

The couple's union was annulled by Los Angeles Superior Court, according to documents obtained this week by the television show "Extra."

Zellweger and Chesney were wed in a small ceremony on the Caribbean island of St. John in the US Virgin Islands in May. It was the first marriage for both. *AP*

Most 'Googled'

WASHINGTON—New Mum Britney Spears and risque pop princess Janet Jackson topped the charts for the most frequently requested items on search engines Yahoo and Google in 2005.

Spears edged out rapper 50 Cent, the US-based Cartoon Network and comeback singer Mariah Carey on Yahoo's American list of overall top searches.

The top news story searched for by Yahoo users was the Asian tsunami.

Over at rival Google, Janet Jackson emerged first on a list of news searches for 2005, surprisingly edging out Hurricane Katrina. The Asian tsunami came next. *AFP*

Tape seized

LONDON—Police have seized a copy of a video purporting to show British supermodel Kate Moss snorting cocaine, the Daily Mirror newspaper, which first exposed its existence, said.

The Evening Standard newspaper said detectives had successfully applied to a south London court last week to get the 45-minute tape from the tabloid.

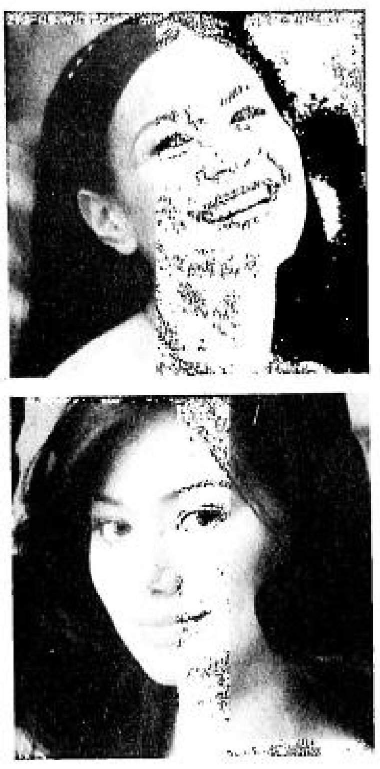
It was apparently recorded in early September at a west London studio where bad-boy rock singer Pete Doherty, her on-off love interest, was recording with his band Babyshambles. *AFP*

Bo sick

LAS VEGAS—"American Idol" runner-up Bo Bice was taken to a hospital with complications from recent intestinal surgery, a publicist for his record label said.

Bice, 30, became ill while rehearsing for a performance on the 2005 Radio Music Awards at the Aladdin Resort & Casino, said Roger Widynowski, a publicist for RCA Records.

Bice has just released his first album, "The Real Thing." *AP*



IZA and Francine are two of the loveliest in this year's crop.

How young stars fared...

From page A2-1

performer in that exceptional film, so we trust that a mainstream producer will give her another attention-calling cinematic showcase next year.

Stella Ignacio

JAZZ Nights at Wasabi (Makati Avenue, beside Manila Peninsula) features scat jazz vocalist **Stella Ignacio** on Thursday at 9 p.m. Backing her up is the JazzPhil Ensemble (**Aya Yuson, Ritchie Quirino, Butch Silverio, Deo Arellano** and **David Harder**).

Another Pinoy winner

DISCOVERY Network's Asia and Nokia have announced the winner of the First Time Mobile Filmmaker Award: **Janice Yu** from the Philippines.

Of the more than 1,000 entries received, 15 contestants were short-listed and flown to Singapore for an intensive workshop in mobile filmmaking, using the Nokia N90.

After another elimination round, six finalists were left—**Bob Calabritto** (Indonesia), **Janice Yu** and **Noel Osting** (Philippines), **Ngoi Soon Ling** and **Oman Dhas** (Singapore), and **Ndol Lerkwsirisuk** (Thailand).

Yu won the grand prize of US$10,000 after receiving the highest overall score. **Noel Osting** won the Best Editing award, and the Best Visualization award went to Ndol Lerkwsirisuk.

JAYCEE Parker rediscovered

Animax yearender

ANIMAX Asia fields these special shows: From Dec. 28-30 at midnight, "Otugi Zoshi—The Legend of Magatama." From Dec. 26-30 at 8 p.m., "Initial D," a marathon special of 14 episodes, with **Angel Locsin** voice-acting the role of Kyoko Iwase. Dec. 30 at 9:30 p.m., Episodes 1-5 of "Yu Yu Hakusho." And on Jan. 1 at 5 and 10 p.m., "Cowboy Bebop."

'Unstoppable Wave'

THE DISCOVERY Channel's "Unstoppable Wave" special will be telecast tonight at 9, and replayed tomorrow at 5 a.m. and 3 p.m. It reveals geological new evidence that seafloor uplift from the 9.2 magnitude Great Sumatra earthquake—not a giant underwater landslide, as previously thought—caused the devastating Dec. 26, 2004 Asian tsunami.

CLAUDINE holds on

SPELLBOUND:

THE GREATEST MAGIC SHOW ON EARTH OPENED YESTERDAY TO HUGE CROWDS AT THE BIG DOME!!!

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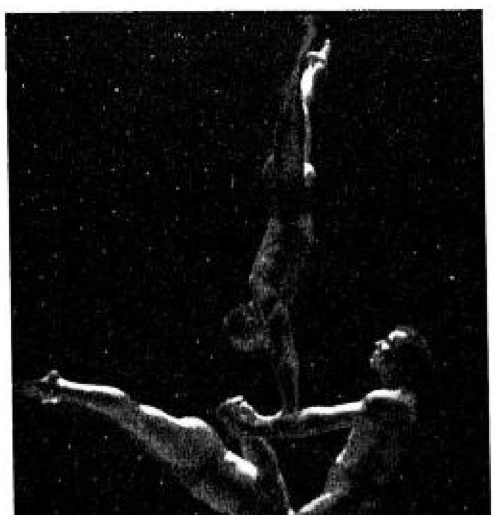

Watch death-defying aerial maneuvers by the acrobatic team of HUMAN DESIGN!

Dick Fosters' Spellbound is a joint presentation of Viva Productions and the Araneta Coliseum. Performances start on December 25, 2005. Ticket Prices are P1,250-, P1,050-, P735-, P525- and P315-. Tickets are available at all Ticket Net outlets or you can call 911-5555. You can also visit the websites: www.aranetacoliseum.com or www.viva.com.ph.

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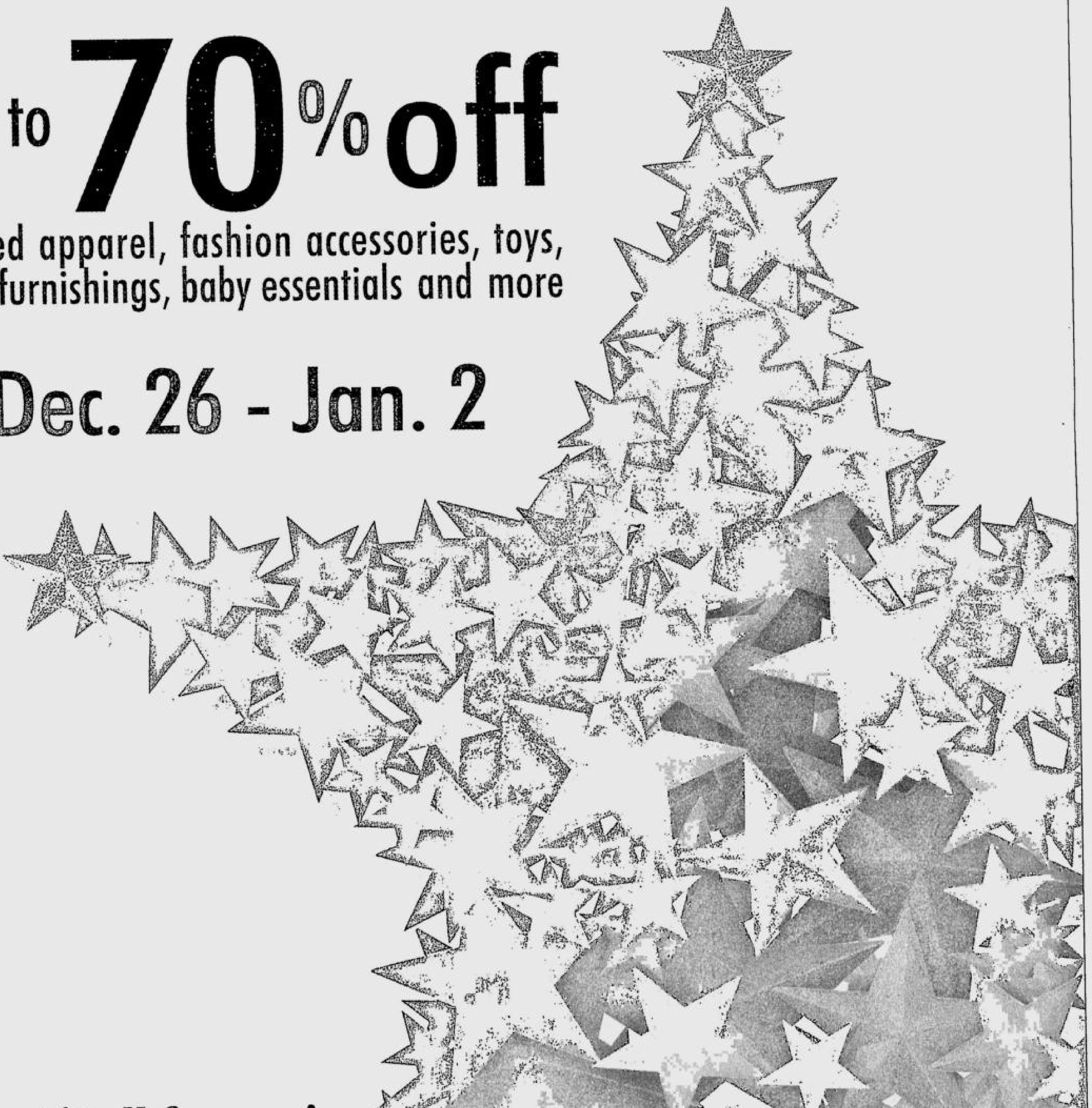

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Yes, we did!

Kristine Hermosa tells all—at last

By Nini Valera

WITH her "secret" groom Diether Ocampo: They had legal, not personal, problems, she says.

KRISTINE HERMOSA FINALLY ANSWERED questions about her civil wedding to Diether Ocampo and why she filed a petition in court to have it nullified.

"We just want to wipe the slate clean and start again," said Kristine during the recent press conference for her new ABS-CBN soap, a revival of the 1960s television drama, "Gulong ng Palad."

She also admitted that she and Diether are back together—and happy.

"We are working at bringing back our relationship to where it was before all these issues," Kristine said, apparently referring to the civil wedding held in Jaen, Nueva Ecija, and officiated by Mayor Toni Esquivel.

For a long while, Kristine and Diether avoided answering questions about the wedding. They neither confirmed nor denied that it took place, keeping the public guessing—even if Mayor Esquivel had appeared on national television to talk about the civil rites.

The first public indication that there had been a wedding, indeed, was when Kristine filed a nullification of the marriage before the Makati City court in the middle of this year. The event was covered by television news programs.

Kristine insisted during an interview with INQUIRER Entertainment after the press con: "It's not [really] an annulment but a nullification of [the ceremony]. It's already in court so I can't talk about it. It might just confuse you. I myself am confused."

She was clear on one thing: the issues are legal, not personal. "So many things were wrong (about the marriage)," she said. "There were so many things that should not have happened, but did happen. That's why we want to straighten things out."

Once the issues are resolved, she said, they would get married in Church.

Tiff with Pauleen

Having started answering personal questions, Kristine also told the movie press that she had snubbed starlet Pauleen Luna, a co-host on "Eat Bulaga," during her guest appearance on the program to promote her Metro Manila Film Festival movie, "Enteng Kabisote."

"That's true," she said, referring to the encounter. Pauleen was earlier linked to Diether. "In the first place, we are not really friends so why should I talk to her?"

Kristine also admitted that, prior to that incident, she had confronted Pauleen

YES/ A3-3

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival opened yesterday with seven entries that comprise Batch 1. Batch 2 consists of three entries—including this one—that open on Jan. 1.)

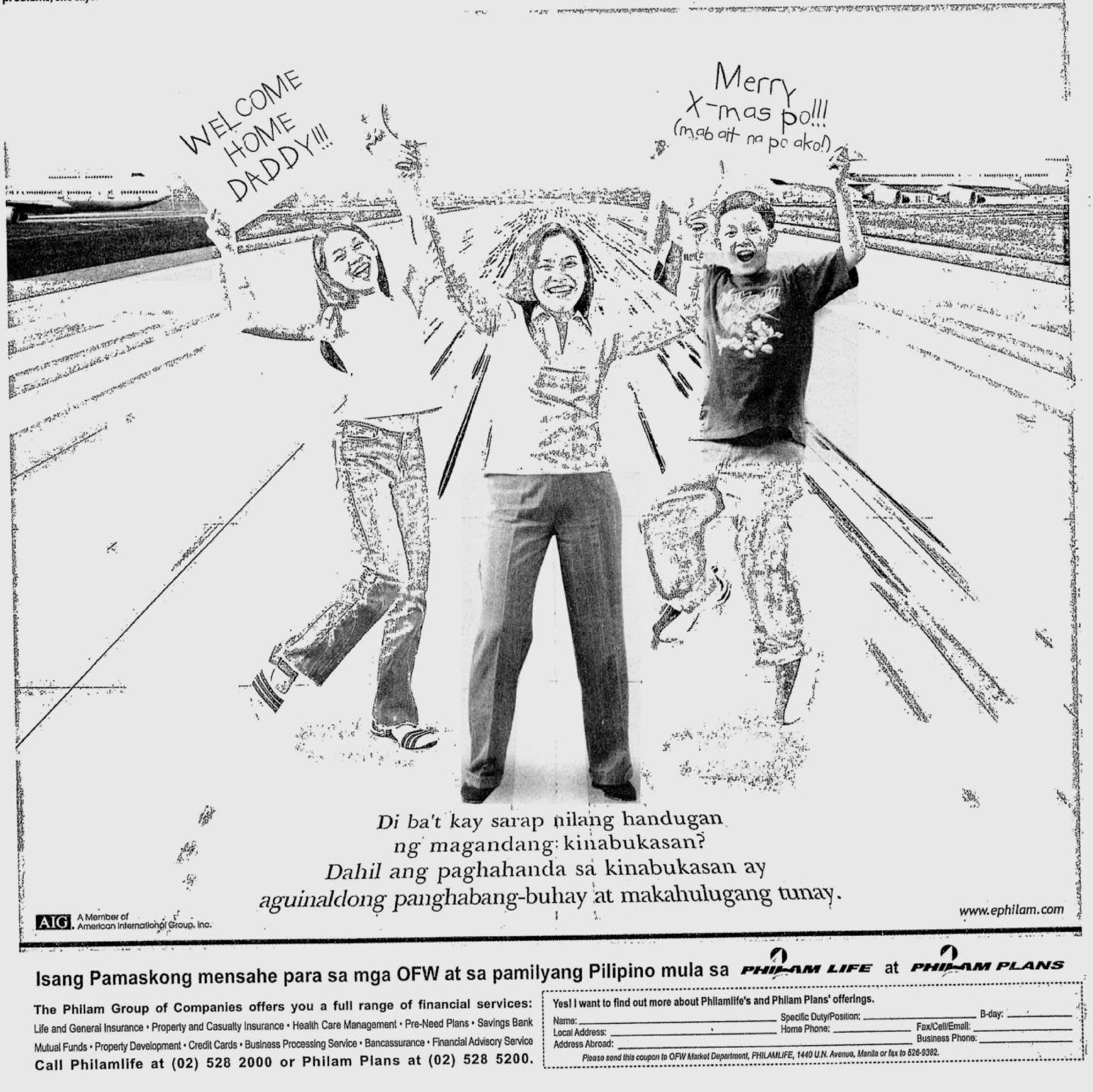
'Mourning Girls'

Stars Glydel Mercado, Chin-Chin Gutierrez, Assunta de Rossi, Juliana Palermo, Ricky Davao, Cogie Domingo, Janna Victoria, Dexter Doria, Cristine Reyes, Paolo Serrano, McMiel Dennison, Kenneth Punzalan, Roy Alvarez

Directed by Gil M. Portes

ACCLAIMED for his timely and socially relevant films, Portes ventures into unfamiliar terrain. "It's my first comedy film," he says. "It's filled with absurd, black humor. But like my other movies, 'Mourning Girls' can also happen in real life."

MOURNING/ A3-3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December 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

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AYALA CINEMAS

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	4 EXODUS			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MULAWIN	2 TERRORIST HUNTER	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	3 MULAWIN	4 TERRORIST HUNTER			

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2 TERRORIST HUNTER	7 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE	8 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE	9 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL	10 MULAWIN

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 KUTOB 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 MULAWIN 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00	6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
4 TERRORIST HUNTER 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	7 EXODUS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

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1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 11:15 1:45 4:15 6:45 9:15	5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS	6 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 ENTENG KABISOTE	7 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	8 EXODUS

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4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
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3 MULAWIN
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Kristine: Yes, we did!

From page A3-1

about the rumors regarding Diether. "I asked her if it was true," Kristine said. "She told me it wasn't. It was that simple. I am a very frank person. I say what I want to say; there's no beating around the bush."

But Kristine denied the talk that she had persuaded the producers of "Enteng Kabisote" into dropping Pauleen from the movie's cast. "I didn't even know she was supposed to be in the movie. All I know is that I'm in the movie. But if she had been in the cast, too, okay *lang*. It's just work," Kristine insisted."

Deciding factor

A member of the production staff of "Enteng Kabisote" confirmed that Pauleen was part of the original cast, but that her very tight schedule had not allowed her to do the movie. The staffer added that Pauleen's conflict with Kristine was also considered in the decision to drop the young actress.

There is no such conflict in the cast of Kristine's "Gulong ng Palad," which stars airing in January.

Kristine plays the role of Luisa to TJ Trinidad's Carding, a first-time leading man for the actress.

"At first it's difficult to team up with other leading men, especially since I was Echo's (Jericho Rosales) screen partner for the longest time, and then Diether's. But once I adjust to the new partner—and we start bonding—then it starts to work."

Weeks before the soap starts, TJ has been reported in television talk shows as courting Kristine.

Both denied to INQUIRER Entertainment that they were an item.

'Mourning Girls'

From page A3-1

Meet the film's titular mourners: a former small-town beauty queen (Mercado), a born-again provincial lass (Gutierrez), a has-been bold star (De Rossi) and a sultry maid (Palermo).

These "desperate housewives and househelp" go *mano a mano* at the wake of their philandering partner (Davao)—with their children and friends joining in.

"They have their own reasons and truths," Gutierrez points out. "But they must learn to listen to each other for peace to prevail."

Hearing Gutierrez's ruminations prompts Portes to exclaim: "See how complex the film is!"

That there is another woman-powered flick ("Ako Legal Wife") in the film fest is not lost on Portes.

"The difference is: In 'Legal Wife,' the women are fighting for the love of a man who's alive; in my movie, they are quarreling over a corpse!"

Oh.

"The script (by Adolf Alix, Senedy Que and Portes) is well-written," Gutierrez says. "It discusses forgiveness and other serious issues but in a humorous fashion."

Bayani San Diego Jr.

No rift between Sotto and GMA …

From page A3-4

on "Eat... Bulaga!"

"We wanted the viewers of 'Eat Bulaga!' to see the lead stars together. We're still trying to work this out," Abrogar told INQUIRER Entertainment on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, she defended GMA 7 executives from rumors that they are disappointed with the poor rating that "Etheria," the network's newest *fantaserye*, received during the airing of its first few episodes.

Abrogar claimed that the pilot episode was, in fact, watched by as many viewers as its sequel, "Encantadia." She explained that the drop in viewing level is normal during this time of the year.

"People are busy because of the holidays. They are out partying and do not have time to watch TV. The drop in viewing level was felt not only by GMA 7 but also by other networks," Gozon-Abrogar said. "'Etheria' is still the highest rating soap series today."

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MULAWIN GP 12:15,2:40,5:05, 7:30,9:55
TERRORIST HUNTER PG13 12:10,2:30,4:50, 7:10,9:30
KUTOB PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10
SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL PG13 12:55,3:15,5:35, 7:55,10:15
EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00
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① ENTENG KABISOTE 2 MTRCB GP 12.20, 2.45, 5.10, 7:35, 10.00
③ TERRORIST HUNTER MTRCB PG-13 11.50, 2.15, 4.40, 7.05, 9:30
② MULAWIN THE MOVIE MTRCB GP 12.00, 2.30, 5.00, 7:30, 10.00
④ KUTOB MTRCB PG-13 12.20, 2.45, 5.10, 7:35, 10.00
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CINEMA 4 KUTOB PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50
CINEMA 5 EXODUS - PG13 10:40, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
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SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
AKO, LEGAL WIFE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
EXODUS 11:00 / 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
KUTOB 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 10:40 / 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
TERRORIST HUNTER 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ KUTOB 11:40 / 2:55 / 4:10 / 6:25 / 8:40
❹ ENTENG KABISOTE 2 11:55 / 2:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
❷ TERRORIST HUNTER 11:10 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
❺ AKO LEGAL WIFE 11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
❸ MULAWIN 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
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1 KING KONG 01:20FS/01:40MF 04:50LFS/05:05LMF/08:15END
2 KING KONG 11:00FS/11:15MF 02:23LFS/02:40LMF/05:55END
3 KING KONG 10:35FS/10:45MF 01:53LFS/02:10LMF/05:20END
MANILA
6 KING KONG 11:30MF/02:55/06:20 09:20LFS/09:45LMF/12:45END
METRO MANILA
SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 FAMILY STONE
9 THE FOG
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 THE MAN
12 KING KONG
SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 THE FOG
SM CITY BICUTAN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY TONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG
SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 CHICKEN LITTLE
12 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
7 THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 FAMILY STONE
4 MERRY CHRISTMAS
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
SM CITY MANILA
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 THE MYTH
10 IN HER SHOES
11 THE FOG
12 THE MAN
SM SAN LAZARO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG
LUZON
SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARI NG SABLAY
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
SM CITY BAGUIO
1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 FAMILY STONE
SM CITY BACOOR
1 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
8 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG
SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 THE MYTH
SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
VISAYAS AND MINDANAO
SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
SM CITY ILOILO
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 RESERVED
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 THE FOG
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
SM CITY DAVAO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG
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No rift between Sotto and GMA 7 boss

By Marinel R. Cruz

"GMA 7'S COMMERCIAL LOAD IS AT IT heaviest these days; that's why it hardly airs plugs. It's not true that the station refuses to plug filmfest movies because it produced 'Mulawin,'" said GMA Films president Annette Gozon-Abrogar.

Abrogar was reacting to reports that a "rift" is growing between GMA Network, producer of "Mulawin The Movie," and M-Zet Films, producer of "Enteng Kabisote 2 Okay Ka Fairy Ko," because both films are entries to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival.

Comedian Vic Sotto, lead star of "Enteng," is one of the hosts of "Eat... Bulaga!" the longest-running show on GMA 7. Sotto's films have been MMFF's top grossers for three consecutive years.

Tough

Abrogar's father, GMA 7 president Felipe Gozon, reportedly asked Sotto not to join the MMFF this year because the latter's movie is sure to be "Mulawin's" toughest competitor in the box-office.

Both films are in the first batch of entries, opening in theaters today.

Cast members of "Mulawin" were allegedly banned from promoting the movie on "Eat... Bulaga!" while advertisements of "Enteng Kabisote 2" were reportedly placed only on Sotto's noontime show and not on other GMA 7 shows.

"*Walang ganu'n,*" Abrogar said of the rumored rift between Gozon and Sotto. "A few weeks ago, my dad had a meeting with Tony Tuviera precisely to discuss this. My dad wanted to make sure there would be no misunderstanding. The meeting ended well. Tuviera even attended GMA 7's Christmas party and my dad's birthday celebration."

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

ANNETTE Gozon-Abrogar

VIC Sotto

Tuviera is president of Television and Production Exponents Inc. (TAPE), which produces "Eat... Bulaga!"

"Its not fair to say that the network does not help promote 'Enteng Kabisote.' In fact, interviews with some of its cast members were aired on '24 Oras' and our show biz talk shows," Abrogar pointed out.

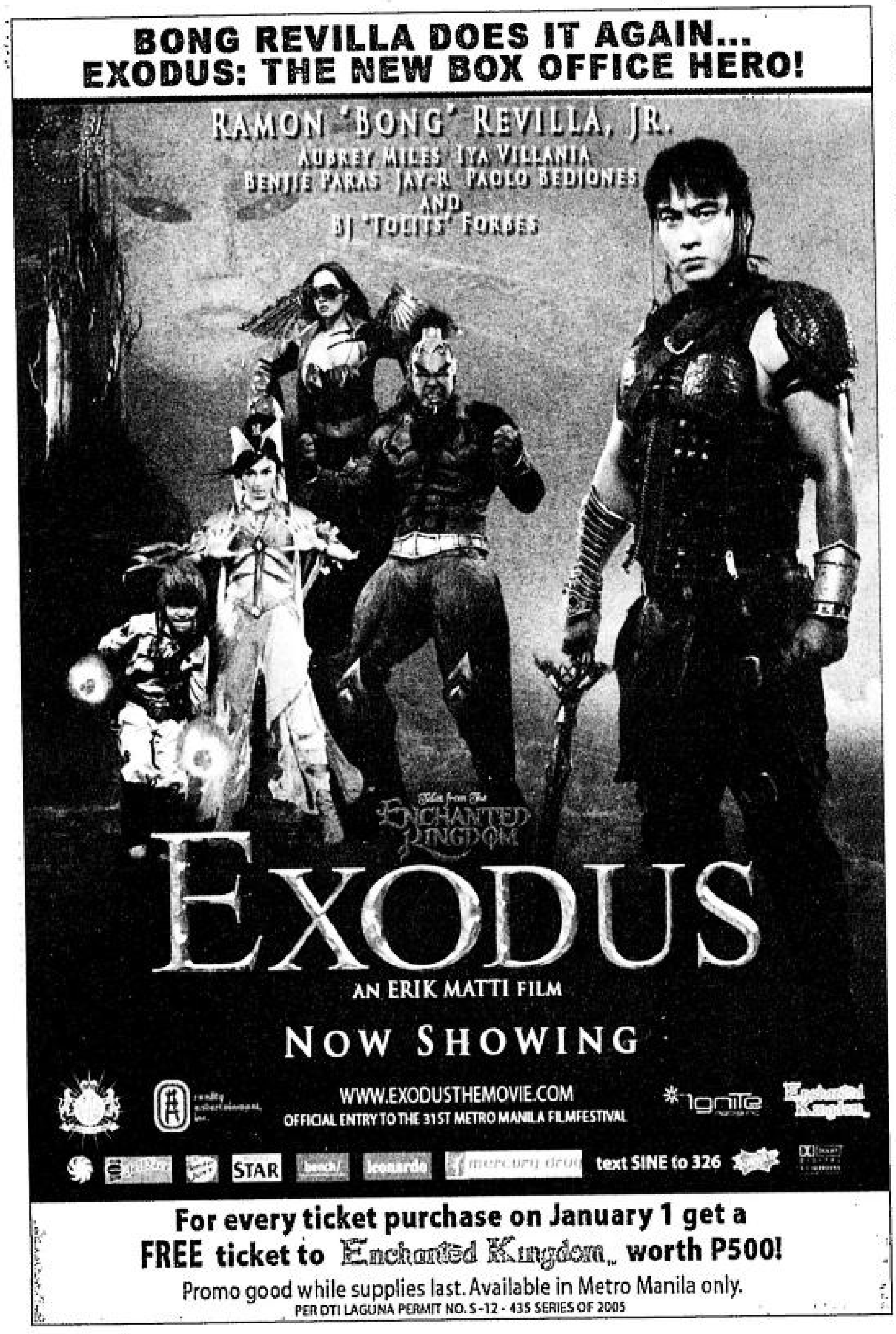
She added: "It's not just 'Enteng'—there's been very few plugs for Bong Revilla's movie as well, because of the heavy ad load."

Hectic

Revilla plays the lead role in Imus Productions' "The Tale of the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus," another film fest entry. The actor-senator is a mainstay of GMA 7's late night sitcom, "Hokus Pokus."

Abrogar added that the hectic schedules of "Mulawin" stars Richard Gutierrez and Angel Locsin have kept them from appearing

NO RIFT/ A3-3



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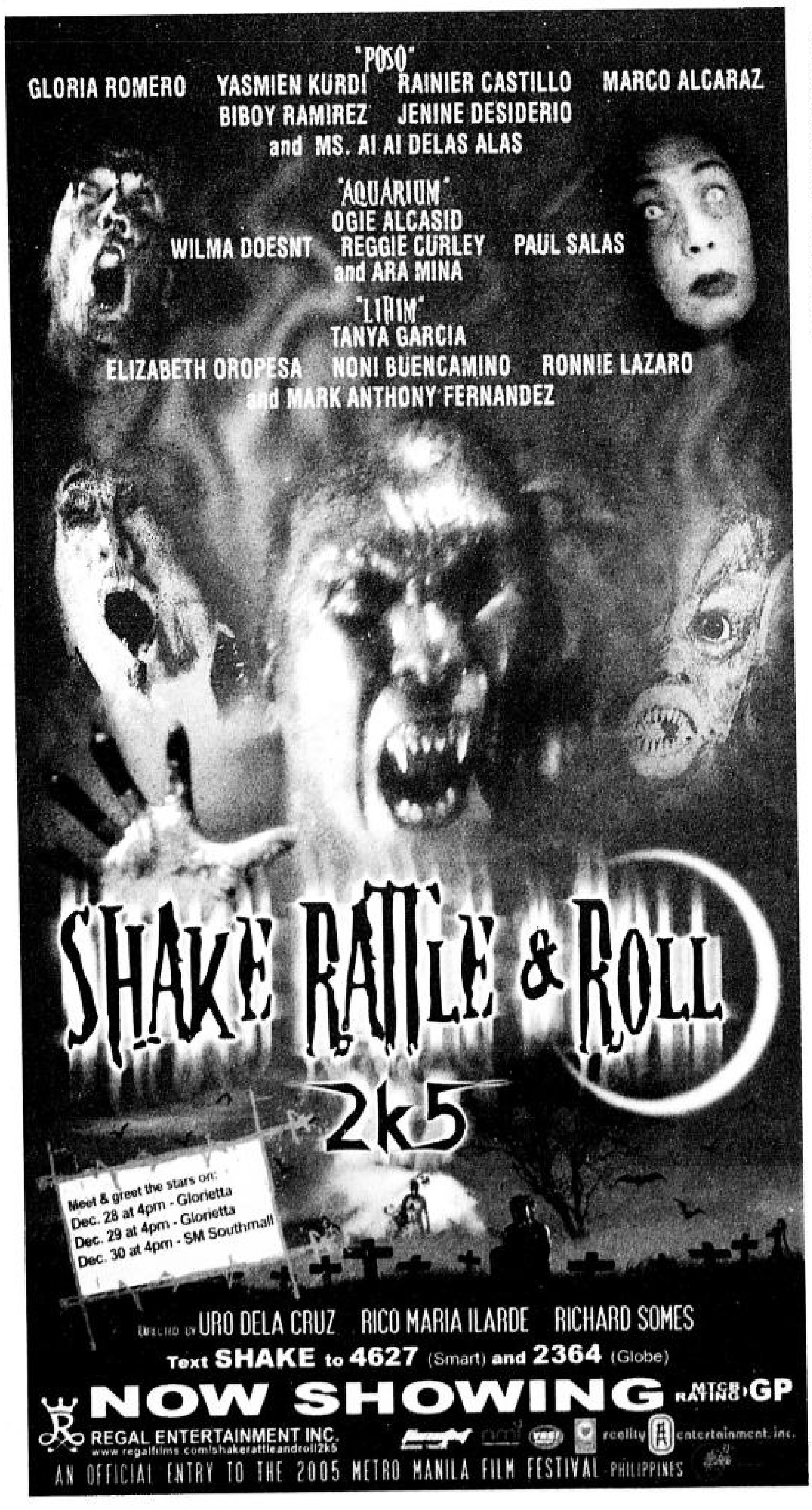

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Stable crude oil prices forecast for 2006

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMERS ARE IN FOR A GOOD 2006 AS OIL prices are expected to stay steady or even decline next year, an industry watchdog has said.

Raul Concepcion, chair of the Consumer and Oil Price Watch, said he was confident that oil prices would stabilize next year following a very erratic trend in 2004 and 2005.

"Oil prices will not go up. These will stay steady or may even go down, due mainly to a number of different factors in the international market," he said in a recent briefing.

He said that the United States and other big oil users around the world had signified plans to more aggressively tap alternative energy sources, including nuclear, coal-to-gasoline and ethanol.

"They're doing this because they don't want to be so dependent on oil, seeing what happened to prices these past months. Using these alternative energy sources will entail a lot of money, so once they get into (these new sources), there's no turning back," he said.

Another factor that would contribute to more stable oil prices, he said, was Russia's move to pump and refine more oil to address global demand.

Also, once all political issues in Iraq are resolved and once it starts producing more oil, he said global supply would increase to more comfortable levels, which would then help keep prices at bay.

"Iraq will not bomb its own pipelines, so there will be less threat of terrorist attacks there. This will happen when all issues in the country are resolved," he explained.

Considering all these factors, he said overall dependence on oil would surely go down.

The Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (Ippca) had earlier committed not to implement any pump price increases up to the end of the year.

IPPCA chair Fernando Martinez assured motorists that they would not be subjected to any additional burden this coming holiday season, even as regional finished product prices have started to come close to or even breach the $60-a-barrel mark.

According to documents from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude had climbed to a December average of $53.45 a barrel from the November average of $51.39.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products has likewise increased to an average of $61.10 a barrel in the first 22 days of December, after falling considerably from last month's $60.87.

MOPS-based diesel surged to an average of $66.50 a barrel in the Dec. 1-22 period from $64.84 in November.

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How are RP online retailers faring?

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A STUDY ON FILIPINO ONLINE retailers that have survived the dot-com crash has shown that it takes more than patience and luck to sell goods online.

A combination of branding, advertising, and technology can spell the difference for some online Filipino retailers, according to a study titled, "Business-to-consumer online commerce in the Philippines" by Asian Institute of Management student Anna Mendoza.

Mendoza presented results of her study at the recently held One Internet Day event.

The study showed that there are now five active Filipino "outbound" online retailers—KabayanCentral.com, Divisoria.com, TuroTuro.com, TitikPilipino.com and myAyala.com.

While KabayanCentral.com was the first to focus on selling Pinoy items online back in 1998, the study concluded that myAyala.com proved to have the best formula for attracting more business, despite its later emergence in 2000.

MyAyala.com is the online retail Website equivalent to the brick-and-mortar of Ayala-owned malls.

Mendoza's analysis showed that myAyala turned out to be the top online Filipino retailer by the study's nine "key success factors" in online retailing.

These key success factors are brand awareness, online presence in advertising, credible reputation, customer satisfaction, reach and coverage, product selection, convenience, company strength, and price.

MyAyala dominated in five out of nine key success factors, according to Mendoza, leading her to conclude that people still prefer to buy from click-and-mortar firms with a well-established reputation in the real world.

The study also found some interesting facts: a search on words like "Filipino, music, video, books, cd" would most often lead people to Divisoria.com, followed by Kabayancentral.com.

Brand awareness courtesy of online and offline advertising puts the online retailer myAyala way ahead of pure online retailers. "MyAyala is the only online retailer that has a brick and mortal counterpart and has also the most number of mediums of advertising," Mendoza added.

An extensive selection of products does not translate to more visitors and eventually customers, the study said. MyAyala has clearly dominated in the area of customer satisfaction despite more products found in Kabayancentral.com's virtual shop.

MyAyala has also been rated as the best in terms of customer satisfaction and support. It was also found to be pricing its products lower than the other online retailers studied. The company however offsets this with high shipping cost, Mendoza said.

Study shows high demand for software engineers in RP

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

A STUDY BY THE JAPAN INTERNATIONAL Cooperation Agency (Jica) shows a very high demand for software engineers among IT companies in the Philippines and that software engineers with specific skills have better chances of finding employment.

The study, titled "Philippine IT Human Resource Needs Survey Report," covered 52 IT services companies in Metro Manila and Cebu that provide software systems integration, telecommunications and networking.

Jica tapped research firm SpiceWorx to conduct the study as part of the curriculum development and strategic teaching program for the Jica-funded University of the Philippines Information Technology Training Center (UPITTC).

The study showed that 22 of the 52 companies expect to hire 800 IT engineers. Of that number, 659 new application software development engineers will be hired, 86 will be embedded software engineers, and the rest network systems engineers.

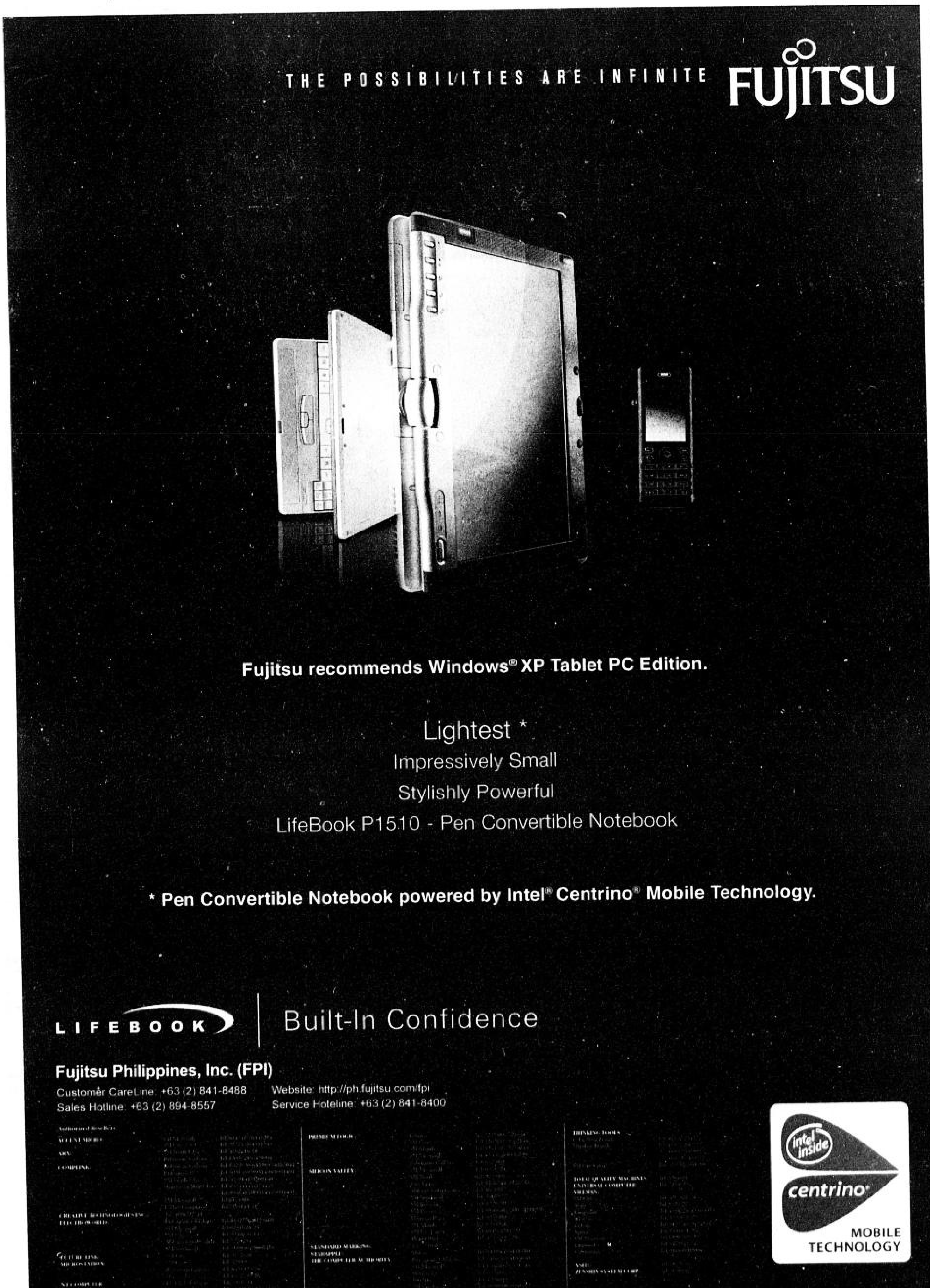
Respondent companies also require more than just hands-on programming skills. They also need higher level IT skills in project management, database design, quality assurance, and actual experience in software development.

There is also an expected increase in demand for workers with skills in Java, .Net, ASP, XML, and several open source technologies.

Some soft skills are also required in potential employees, among them verbal and written communication proficiency, technical writing, presentation, and basic business manners.

The study recommended that the UPITTC align its student population to future industry demand for each specific engineer. In particular, the study pointed to a looming shortage in embedded software engineers in Japan, which the UPITTC can fill as it accepts more students.

The study also suggested that the UPITTC constantly talk with the Philippine Export Zone Authority and the Bureau of Investment for foreign investors who may want to put up facilities in the Philippines and may have a potential demand for software engineers.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Solon blames broadband tech for proliferation of pornography

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A LAWMAKER WHO WAS ALSO FORMER chief of the National Telecommunications Commission blamed the advent of "cheap, high-speed Internet access" for the proliferation of pornography and so-called "cybersex" activities.

While broadband Internet access has ushered in e-commerce, Catanduanes Rep. Joseph Santiago said this innovation has also fostered pornography and felonious, organized cybersex operations.

Serving as vice chair of the House committee on transportation and communications, Santiago cited recent studies showing that 25 percent of broadband users listed downloading pornography as a reason for upgrading from a simple dial-up Internet connection to broadband or digital subscriber line.

He said that about 19 percent of all Web traffic today and about 25 percent of all Web searches are pornography-related. These figures were based on traffic through the top five Internet search engines, including Google, Yahoo!, MSN, America Online and Ask Jeeves.

Early this year, Santiago said that over 200,000 Filipinos may have been lured by cybersex rings based on the registry of one popular Internet site peddling online sexual activities.

Operators of web-based pornography often lure men and women, and even children, to perform live sexual acts for a fee before cameras, which then stream images directly to the computers of paying Internet users.

The Philippines has about 11.8 million Internet users as of 2004, data from International Data Corp. (IDC). By 2007, the country's Internet users are expected double to 20 million.

Britney tops 2005 Web search list

WASHINGTON—NEW MOTHER BRITNEY Spears and risque pop princess Janet Jackson topped the charts for the most frequently requested items on search engines Yahoo and Google in 2005.

Spears edged out rapper 50 Cent, the US-based Cartoon Network and comeback singer Mariah Carey on Yahoo's American list of overall top searches.

The top news story searched for by Yahoo users was the Asian tsunami, which struck just before the end of 2004, followed by Iraq, and the Michael Jackson child sex trial.

Digital cameras, perennial favorite flowers, and the trendy iPod digital music player topped the list of most popular product searches on the site.

Over at rival Google, Janet Jackson emerged first on a list of news searches for 2005, surprisingly edging out Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf coast and New Orleans in August.

The Asian tsunami came next, followed by the XBox 360 portable games console ahead of the former Mr Jennifer Aniston, Brad Pitt, who saw his new belle Angelina Jolie come in ninth.

The iPod topped the list of the most popular items on the Froogle smart shopping site, followed by digital cameras. *AFP*

Liars, liars

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

THE CHAIR/PRESIDENT OF THE INTEGRATED Bar of the Philippines, Jose Manuel Cadiz, and his entire board have just been overruled by the Supreme Court for wrongly saving the skin of their fellow lawyer.

Cadiz and company had earlier overturned a recommendation by an IBP investigator to suspend for three months a UP Sigma Rho lawyer who was found to have switched loyalties and opposed his previous client in a number of cases.

Cocktales will not identify the complainant, since we are related by affinity, nor the erring lawyer, since he and his wife are, or is it now were, our friends.

But more than the lawyer's suspension, the legal legerdemain resorted to by Cadiz and the IBP board to protect their fellow compañero caused the Supreme Court to be disturbed, from the IBP's hesitance to furnish the complainant a copy of their decision but also by the IBP's "nebulous explanation" for the one-year lag in releasing a copy of the decision from its promulgation.

And not only did the IBP board overturn the suspension recommendation made by IBP Investigating Commissioner Milagros San Juan, but the exoneration ruling subsequently made by another IBP official omitted a key phrase in quoting the Rules of Court to let the erring lawyer off the hook.

The eagle-eyed *ponente*, Justice Conchita Carpio Morales, noted that the revised IBP decision had omitted the phrase "any person" in quoting Section 1, Rule 139-B, "thus making it appear that complainants must have personal knowledge of the facts they allege" in disbarment proceedings.

Carpio Morales also noted that Cadiz himself rebuffed the complainant from appealing the case, with Cadiz erroneously claiming that, first, the complainant had no legal personality to pursue the complaint, and, failing that, that the appeal had been filed past deadline.

It is not immediately clear whether the IBP or the suspended lawyer would file an appeal, but just to let the readers glean the prospects of such an undertaking, the then-chair of the SC division to which Carpio Morales belonged to is now the Chief Justice, Artemio Panganiban, himself.

Money-go-round

- HARLEY Sy, a son of taipan Henry Sy, has received a pre-Christmas gift from the Supreme Court when the high tribunal upheld the dismissal by the Court of Appeals of the estafa case filed by trader Edwin Yu over a botched margarine deal.
- Petron chair Nicasio Alcantara's two-decade fight with businessman Vicente Ponce over Iligan Cement Corp. scored a moral victory from the Supreme Court, after the high tribunal last week fined Ponce and his three lawyers P2,000 each for indirect contempt, The Ponce camp "swamped the court with pleadings and motions" despite the Supreme Court having already dismissed their case with finality.
- Fortune Tobacco, in a default judgment, has been fined more than $1.4 million by the Superior Court of Saipan for allegedly failing to deposit funds into a US government escrow fund. Fortune earlier claimed it had already stopped exporting Hope and Champion cigarets into the US territory—whatever were available there were either leftover stock or brought in by third-party traders—and, hence, there was no more need to comply with the escrow fund requirement.

Heard through the grapevine

CHINA Airlines will attempt to make the first Taiwan-to-Kalibo flight on Wednesday, in what is hoped to be the start of a seasonal charter run to bring Taiwanese tourists straight to Boracay.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Investments in IT projects hit ₱49.9B

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-RELATED projects continued to drive growth for investments committed to the country's economic zones, reaching P49.9 billion in the 11 months to November, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority reported.

Peza Director General Lilia B. de Lima said the amount meant an increase of 21.6 percent from P41 billion posted in the same period last year.

De Lima said investments registered from January to November accounted for P45.06 billion of local capital and about P4.8 billion of foreign direct investment.

Also, the 355 projects committed by ecozone developers and project operators as of end-November were expected to provide 65,376 new jobs, or 30 percent higher than the 50,240 promised in the same period in 2004.

For November alone, De Lima said approved projects reached P3.2 billion, or 9.4 percent higher than the P2.3 billion registered in the same month last year.

Investments committed last month accounted for P3.18 billion of local capital and P20 million of foreign capital.

The Peza chief said 38 projects approved in November were expected to generate export revenues of $622.3 million a year and 3,570 new jobs.

Peza data showed that of the total number of approved projects, five IT investments accounted for about P77 million.

In November 2004, no projects related to IT-enabled services were approved for Peza registration.

From January to November, 64 approved IT-related investments reached about P6.9 billion in capital outlay, or 12.8 percent higher than the P6.1 billion posted last year.

These projects were expected to create a total of 28,745 jobs directly, which topped last year's promised job creation by 78 percent from about 16,000.

Also, Peza reported that the ecozones earned a total of $26.3 billion in exports in the 10 months to October, or 3 percent higher than the $25.5 billion posted in the same period in 2004.

PPA urges DBP to raise ₱2B for port development

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY IS ASKing the Development Bank of the Philippines to issue up to P2 billion worth of seven-year bonds in the first quarter of 2006 to finance the upgrade of ports in at least six provinces.

PPA general manager Oscar Sevilla said the bond would likely bear an interest of 8 percent per year. Proceeds of the bond float, he said, would be used to finance the modernization of ports in Cagayan de Oro, Davao, General Santos, Iloilo, Osamis and Zamboanga.

Development is already ongoing in certain ports, including that in Cagayan de Oro. The money to be raised early next year will ensure that the upgrade will be sustained.

Sevilla said the PPA would also like to develop more roll-on, roll-off ports to expand

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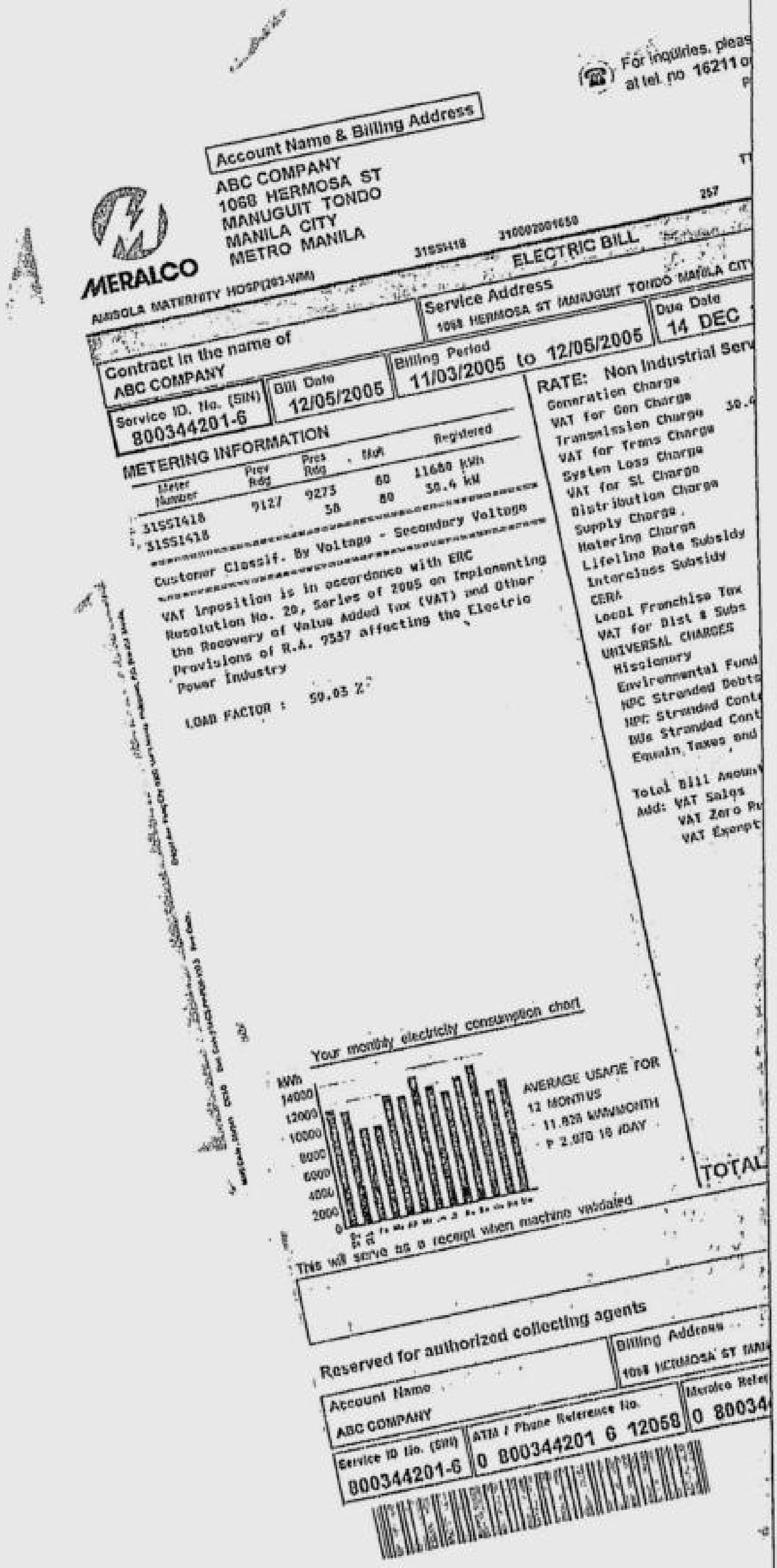
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Call center work can help future entrepreneurs

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

BERT QUINTANA IS A CUBAN-American whose family moved to the US when he was two. But like many migrants, his family has preserved their traditions.

This act has enabled Quintana to adjust well to varied personalities he deals with because of his job.

Quintana is VP for Dell International Services. He leads the operations and management of Dell's global network of 30 Consumer Contact Centers which support Dell business and consumers in the US, Asia and Europe.

Quintana visited Manila recently in the wake of the decision of Dell to set up two call centers in the Philippines. One will be in Makati City and the other in Pasay City at the SM Mall of Asia. The concept of a call center in a mall is a first in the country.

Quintana says it chose the Philippines for its customer contact center because of the strong language and communication skills of its high-quality workforce. It recognizes that the ability of most Filipinos to speak English and its big student population are fast making the Philippines the call center location of choice in Southeast Asia.

"You have terrific talent here. Your people represent a lot of potential," Quinata said.

The Dell VP says his Hispanic origins and his various work assignments is helping him adjust well to the different cultures the call centers are located in.

"I get amazing insights into other people," he said adding that he has worked in New Mexico, Colorado, California, Florida, Tennessee, and today Texas. "I am able to experience positive work relationship with whatever people I meet."

Quintana says working in a call center is a key to future entrepreneurs. "One learns about customers here—how they behave. There is tremendous career growth because when one becomes a group leader, he coaches the staff in different skills."

QUINTANA

He says a call center employee learns the art of dealing with customers—a skill that can be valuable to the service business.

"At a call center, you develop listening skills. You get to a solution quickly," he added.

Quintana said they want to develop leaders in the Philippines. He added that Dell's style is they get locals to run so there is "regional ownership."

Dell is in the Philippines today through a representative office at the Enterprise Plaza in Makati, and through its contact center training and recruitment office at the RCBC Plaza.

The Pasay City contact center will open in February 2006. It will provide service and technical support to Dell consumer customers in the United States.

Dell, the world's largest computer systems company and recognized by Fortune magazine as America's most admired company, has led its industry in phone-based personal computer technical support services.

Dell's global customer contact network includes more than 30 locations dedicated to supporting customers anywhere in the world, anytime of day. The company is using its business process improvement expertise—gained from its acclaimed supply chain management and manufacturing—in its contact center operations to give its customers customized products and services at the best value.

An online innovator and leading consumer technology company, Dell is using the Internet, including an on-demand webcast and online advertising, to reach prospective employees. The company is looking for professionals with contact center experience, technical certification or technical college degrees and is collecting resumés at its employment website www.dell.com/manila.

Becoming an enlarger

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

BEFORE THE NBA EVER HEARD OF Shaquille O'Neal, Dikembe Mutombo or Tim Duncan; back before anyone knew the name Hakeem Olajuwon; in the days before Kareem Abdul-Jabbar ruled the hardwoods, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell changed the nature of professional basketball with the way they played the center position.

Chamberlain was a great scorer and Russell was known more for his defense, but no matter which end of the court they were on, they played above the rim like no centers before them ever had.

Russell, however, is best-known not for his offense or his defense but for something else—winning. His No. 6 jersey was retired by the Boston Celtics in 1972 to honor his contributions as the anchor to teams that won nine consecutive NBA titles.

He added two more titles as a player/coach.

That's why it was such an honor to meet him at a recent NBA All-Star game, and that's why I wasn't surprised to hear what he said about great team players: "The most important measure of how good a game I played was how much better I'd made my teammates play."

One of the qualities of a great team player, you see, is that they "enlarge" others. Bill Russell isn't just a large man; he's a man who enlarged others. He made them better.

Here are five characteristics of people who enlarge others.

1. Enlargers value their teammates.

When you think about your teammates, place a "10" on their heads. If we think of others as 10s, we'll do everything to add value to them. Our behavior is totally different when we think of someone else as a two.

Seeing others in the very best light makes the entire team better because usually our level of performance equals the level of value placed on us.

2. Enlargers know and relate to what their teammates value.

Here's how you can tell if you value people: Do you value people who won't benefit you or only those who might contribute in some way to your success? Great team players truly value others as people, and they know and relate to what others value.

When I want to know and relate to others, I look for five things. I want to know their dreams, values, skills, attitudes and life questions. We all have questions, by the way.

If you can find the pathway to a person's questions, you can always find the pathway to a person's heart.

3. Enlargers add value to their teammates.

Whatever the project, task or situation, enlargers find ways to make others around them better because they approach life as a win/win situation. They realize that making others better isn't just better for others, it's better for everyone. As the old adage goes, a rising tide lifts all boats.

4. Enlargers make themselves more valuable.

You cannot give what you do not have, so self-improvement precedes team improvement. The first step toward improving the team is to improve yourself. I've been teaching leadership for 20 years and I've written twenty-some books. Here's what I know—the only way I can keep leading is to keep growing.

The greatest way that I can add value to my team is to make myself more valuable. If I can become a better player, if I can continually increase my skills, if I can continually become enlarged within myself, then I have the capacity to enlarge others.

Too many people are still trying to give what they learned 15 years ago, and they're in trouble.

5. Enlargers initiate.

Enlargers believe in others before they believe in themselves, serve others before they serve themselves, and add value to others before they add value to themselves. See the common thread? The word "before."

They have the ability to see potential in another person before they even see potential within themselves. They have the ability to start action. They have the ability to start belief. They are initiators.

Initiate. Enlarge. Be a great team player.

Remember, the greatest way that I can add value to my team is to make myself more valuable.

(For information on John Maxwell's in-house or public leadership or teamwork workshops, please e-mail us at maxwell@inspire.ph or call 813-2732/03 and ask for Gina. Text MAXWELL ON to 4632 (Smart) to get daily SMS leadership insights from John Maxwell. God bless!)

ONLY mall with six anchor stores

Beyond six years of renewed service

THIS FOUR-TIERED 200,000-SQUARE-METER complex located at the sprawling Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang is acknowledged as the first theme mall in the Philippines. Since it opened in May of 1998, owned by the Gotianun clan, Festival Supermall has emerged to become one of the most popular destinations of mall-goers in the southern part of Metro Manila.

Right now, it is the only mall with six anchor stores; Shopwise Supercenter, SM Save-More, Robinsons Department Store, Ace Hardware and Gameworx. Likewise, it has a provision for 600 specialty stores, boutiques and kiosks, a total of 2,300 free multi-level parking slots, various food outlets in the newly refurbished 1,000-seat Food Junction and 10 state-of-the-art cinemas. Festival Supermall is one of the few malls in Metro Manila that provides free parking for its tenants and customers.

Festival Supermall was designed by a team of international experts in such a way that there will be maximum convenience for its shoppers, freedom of circulation, maximum visibility and ample exposure to the mall's tenants. Because of this, the family is guaranteed the ultimate fun and excitement with shopping, dining and entertainment all under one roof.

The mall's management must be given credit for being able to come up with very innovative concepts like its main attraction, Pixie Forest and X-Site Amusement Centers at the mall's third level, and frills of contemporary rides.

A new creation is the Treasure Trove, a specialty store lane designed for the meticulous shopper looking for uncommon souvenirs, gift items and accent pieces.

Festival Supermall is located at the Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa.

This coming year, let's STEP forward . . .

MAPping THE FUTURE

Corazon PB. Claudio

... AND TAKE A LEAP TO progress! STEP here is not just a word that means moving one's foot forward. It is also an acronym for the essential elements that we must attend to in order to successfully move forward toward progress.

S and T stand for science and technology; E stands for energy, environment and economy; and P stands for people. We need to understand the issues on these elements that hinder our progress and address them now. I will cite just a few examples and discuss briefly what we are doing and what the reader can do to help.

On S&T

We need S&T to develop and derive the highest value from both our natural and human resources. "Science is the key to our country's future," according to the Philippine Foundation for Science and Technology (PFST), which recently co-organized a public forum on S&T with the Asian Institute of Management and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

The speakers at that forum, led by Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II of the Ayala Corp., recognized the crucial role of education in building an S&T infrastructure. Their recommended measures include strengthening the educational system; fostering closer coordination between academe, research institutions, and industry; and developing a high-quality pool of researchers, scientists and engineers. Our country ranked third and second in math and science (from the bottom!) among 41 nations at the 3rd international mathematics and science study.

The first step is to inspire our young to take up S&T courses. The PFST helps do so through its Science Centrum, which is now located temporarily in Riverbanks, Marikina, and through its two mobile exhibit sets that are brought around the country. Through the centrums and mobile sets and their interactive exhibits, PFST presents S&T in a fun way.

PFST wants to move to a permanent home soon. To do so, PFST needs partners who share the same vision of creating a science-cultured and productive citizenry.

On energy

"Electrification of rural communities is the key to population control." That is based on my personal experience. I grew up in a rural community (Aliaga) without electricity so there were very limited means of recreation. Couples, whose religious upbringing made them look at birth control as a sin, would go to bed early.

Many communities in the countryside, in what the government calls "remote and unviable areas" still require electrification. One of those is our Kalinga IP Para Sa Aeta project site in Bamban, Tarlac, which is only about 20 minutes away from the Clark Mabalacat gate. With the help of the National Transmission Corp., the Tarlac Electric Cooperative and our MAP-TOWNS-GK Project Team, we hope to bring electricity to the site soon. We need many more public-private partnership efforts like this.

On environment

Environmental caring is the key to our sustainability.

In Asia, the Philippines has one of the best legal instruments for curbing air pollution. But, with little resources for monitoring their implementation and a judicial system that is already clogged with legal cases, we continue to suffer from the adverse effects of air pollution.

Other environmental media and issues—water, forest, biodiversity, garbage, toxic waste, and others—now demand our attention, too. Although local government units can still do a lot to address the issues (such as mandating recycling rather than burning of rice straws), laws alone will not save us. The solution must start from reforming our values and attitudes. We must shift to a sustainable lifestyle and care for and respect our environment.

On economy

We often discuss this topic in terms of gross national product and other similar statistics, increase in investments, and other quantifiable economic measures.

One of the main issues remains as the lack of equitable access to resources. We need to speed up the provision of basic infrastructure and services to all communities so that we may unleash everyone's potential to contribute to and share in the development of our country.

The World Bank, together with other fund sources, is responding to this need with its "Panibagong Paraan" program that provides grants for innovative ideas and projects that address equity issues and make "services work for the poor." We need more initiatives like this that stimulate thinking "out of the box."

On people

Our people are our main assets, we often say. But how well do we treat these assets? American essayist James Fallows has an answer: "... people treat each other worse in the Philippines than in any other Asian country I have ever seen." ("A Damaged Culture," Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 1987). And he attributes that to our fragmentation into families and tribes and "lack of useful nationalism."

That criticism hurts. But in the past months, some legislators and old and young leaders and organized groups have effectively demonstrated how true that commentary is. Worse, they have displayed their behavior to our young through mass media, thus ensuring that hateful treatment of each other will continue to the next generation.

With such leadership in all sectors, can we ever repair our damaged culture? If we cannot do so for our generation, perhaps, we can just follow the recommendation of our recent visitor, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who suggested to Filipino businessmen to "think of the next generation."

MAP has decided to respond to these issues and help strengthen our nationalism by adopting as 2006 theme "Call to Action: Country Above Self." It surely requires more than one year to tackle this subject but we must start somewhere. The starting point is a clear definition and understanding of what kind of country we want to have for ourselves and for our children.

(The author co-chairs MAP's environment committee. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph.)

Making privatization work

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

BACK IN THE 1990S, AS CHIEF proponent in President Ramos' Cabinet of his "Philippines 2000" vision, I was frequently asked to translate the vision in terms that the common Filipino can understand. Among other things, I used to say then that Philippines 2000 meant that by the turn of the millennium, we could rely on water to come out whenever we turned on the faucet.

Indeed, getting water 24 hours a day from our faucets was a dream for most of us Filipinos then. In Metro Manila, less than a fourth of residences with water connections enjoyed round-the-clock water. Worse, residents in most depressed communities either spent a good part of their day lining up at one public faucet, or obtained their water from vendors at 10 times the unit cost of what Forbes Park residents paid for their piped water.

Best managed company

Against this background, the announcement last week that Manila Water Co. won the Asiamoney award for Best Managed Company in the Philippines in the small capitalization category (less than US$300 million) is quite significant. According to the prestigious publication, the award's criteria included overall financial and business performance, management strategy and vision, investor relations, access to management and transparency, corporate governance, focus on shareholder value, and operational efficiency.

Given what the company has achieved in the eight years it has served the water needs of the eastern side of Metro Manila, the award is well-deserved. Manila Water has shown how with skillful management, both dramatic improvement in service delivery and financial health can go together—quite unlike the usual record of government-run enterprises we have witnessed through the years. One could only wonder how the situation would have been now, had the government not invited private sector participation in the provision of water in Metro Manila back in 1997.

Great strides

In its concession area in the East Zone, Manila Water has managed to achieve what was merely a dream 10 years ago. From only 26 percent when it took over in 1997, areas with 24-hour water availability are now quickly approaching 100 percent (i.e. 94 percent as of mid-2005). Non-revenue water, or system losses due to various leaks and unauthorized connections, was at 63 percent in 1997. In other words, only a little more than a third of water being delivered by the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) was being paid for then, with the bulk either leaking out or being stolen through illegal connections. No wonder MWSS was in financial straits, and had been a persistent drain on taxpayers' money before private sector participation came in through Manila Water and the Lopez-controlled Maynilad Water Services Inc.

Manila Water has managed to completely reverse these numbers in the eight years it has been in operation. Non-revenue water was down to 35 percent as of last October, well below and well ahead of the government's 43 percent target set for 2007. More importantly, the substantial reduction in leakages has made it possible to deliver more water to more households and establishments. Thus, even with no significant increase in water supply at the source, Manila Water has doubled its customer base since 1997.

Water for the poor

Through all this, the company has consciously combined both social and business objectives, and sought to bring direct water service to the poor communities of eastern Metro Manila through its Tubig Para sa Barangay program. With more than 800,000 residents in various poor communities now benefiting from piped water into their homes, it has been a win-win situation. The beneficiaries now pay only a tenth of what they used to spend for a cubic meter of water, with the convenience of access within their homes. Through an arrangement where the neighborhood collectively manages individual household connections, losses through pilferage are avoided, as the residents themselves find it in their own interest to prevent any illegal connections. Manila Water now finds these households who previously never had access to clean and affordable water supply to be among their strongest supporters.

Triple bottom line

The company has set an example by producing the first Sustainability Report issued by a publicly listed company in the country. The report manifests the firm's confidence in its effective pursuit of the so-called triple bottom-line of economic profitability, social responsibility, and environmental conservation.

The country's experience with privatization has admittedly been a checkered one, leading many civil society advocates to oppose privatization outright, including private sector participation in the provision of public infrastructure. But the current crisis in government finances gives us little choice, if we are to catch up with the lag in the country's infrastructure base. The Manila Water experience gives some comfort that private-public partnerships in infrastructure can work, and with good management, actually work well.

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

GSIS bent on taking over car insurance business

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE Insurance System is still bent on taking over the vehicle insurance business, stressing that concerned policy-making agencies have yet to decide on what reform to pursue to fix the problems confronting the industry.

Members of the technical working group of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) will meet this week to decide on the reforms that will be included in the compulsory third party liability (CTPL) policy, the GSIS said.

The technical working group will also decide on whether to adopt the reform proposal of the GSIS or that of the Insurance Commission.

To put a stop to the rampant sale of fraudulent CTPL policies, the GSIS has proposed that it be made the sole issuer of CTPL policies.

Under its proposal, vehicle owners need not buy CTPL policies from vendors because payment for their vehicle insurance would be automatic once they pay registration and other fees with the Land Transportation Office.

The Insurance Commission is pushing for the implementation of a clearing house system. Under this proposal, vehicle owners will pay the insurance policy they secured only to accredited banks.

Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Escobillo earlier said her office had received the approval in principle of concerned government agencies.

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The Supreme Court and I

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PANGANIBAN, whom I admire deeply, said his Supreme Court would be accessible.

Of the many things he said in that exclusive one-hour TV interview with Korina Sanchez the day after his appointment, this point was the one I liked the most.

To ordinary mortals, the Supreme Court is a lofty perch inhabited by wise men and women dispensing justice all over the archipelago.

Such an institution is beyond the reach of the citizenry.

Desirable

So, a Supreme Court that is accessible is certainly something desirable. But, to my layman's mind, accessibility simply means getting a copy of a decision from the court's records division may be as easy as ordering a hamburger.

But, it isn't.

It used to be that you could get a copy of the Supreme Court's decision absolutely for free.

But, the constantly increasing cost of operations has understandably forced the court to put a price by the page.

The price is quite reasonable. It is the red tape that is bothersome.

Sometime ago, I found myself in the high court's neighborhood. I decided to buy a copy of the decision on the constitutionality of the mining act.

The decision was brilliantly written by then Associate Justice Panganiban.

Surprise

In his highly readable and enjoyable style (the kind of writing style you would least expect from a Supreme Court Justice), he tackled not only the philosophical aspects of mining, but also, surprise of all surprises, the mathematical dimensions of the case.

Any justice who knows his sums has my deepest respect.

At the front gate, I was directed to go to the records division, which necessarily was in the deep recesses of the court.

A clerk wrote the case number and the price on a slip of paper.

Accessibility

I brought the slip to the cashier who was ensconced right by the front gate. After paying, I trudged back to the records division with the receipt. Then, I finally got a copy of the decision.

Why didn't the cashier have a price list, or why couldn't he have called the records division for the price, before pointing me to that direction?

It occurred to me that if the Supreme Court were an insurance company, it would not last long in the business if this were the way they sold their policies.

Fortunately nowadays, if you have Internet facilities, you can get a copy of any decision through the court's website.

Accessibility also means, to my layman's mind, that the so-called low profile cases will get the same care and attention from the Court as the high profile ones.

Backlog

My lawyer tells me that the Supreme Court has dozens of reasons for dismissing low profile cases.

I hear there is an underground storeroom where the backlog of some ten thousand cases, presumably all low profile cases of far lesser importance than high profile cases like the Piatco mess, has been gathering dust over the past decades.

Clearing the backlog is a Herculean task.

I join those who agree wholeheartedly with the appointment of Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all!

PPA urges DBP . . .

From page B3

the government's nautical highway program.

There are 76 existing Roro ports that could accommodate vessels big enough to carry buses and trucks.

The maritime agency had tapped Japan's Pacific Consultants Inc. to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of more Roro ports. Once completed, Sevilla said the PPA would tap foreign funding for the project.

The Arroyo administration is promoting the use of the Roro system to improve trade and tourism. The PPA is trying to convince shipping firms and other maritime service providers to cut their fees by 30 percent, starting with cargoes coming from Mindanao.

The agriculture department is also promoting the use of Roro to bring down the freight cost for farm products. The agency said the government would like to increase the Roro ports to more than 300. The department said the Roro system could help bring down the cost of goods by 25 percent.

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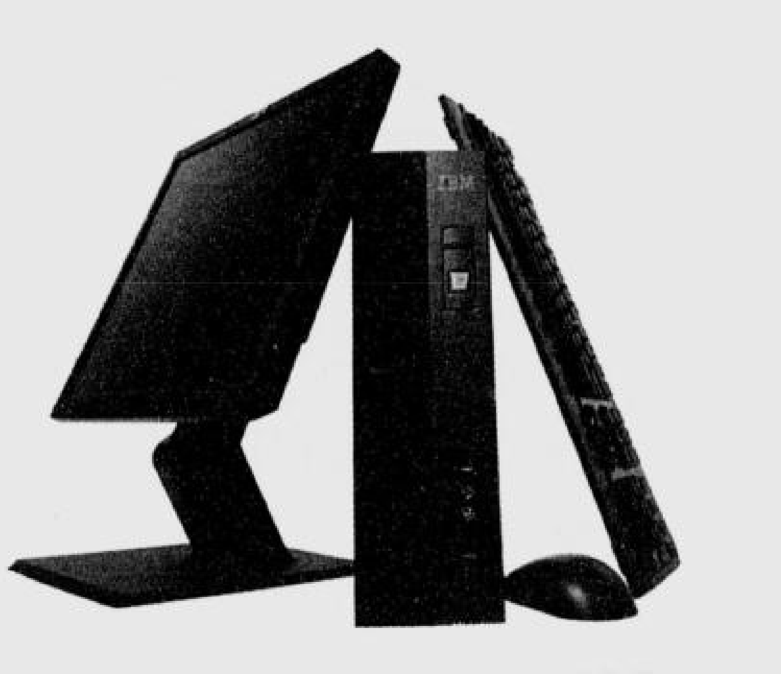

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PERSONAL

PRAYER TO THE
HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, Thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your perpetual glory. Amen

Person must pray this for 3 consecutive days without stating one's wish. After 3rd day your wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be. Promise to publish this as soon as your favor has been granted. MTO

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  - Certificate of Residency Training in Internal Medicine accredited by PCP
  - PCP Diplomate

II. **1-Year Subspecialty Fellowship Training Program in Electrophysiology, Cardiac Rehabilitation, Non-Invasive Cardiology, Invasive Cardiology, Peripheral Vascular and Critical Care Cardiology.**
  - Have completed Residency Training in Internal Medicine and Fellowship in Cardiology in PCP and PCC accredited institutions
  - PCP Diplomate
  - Submit a research proposal
  - Certificate of Fellowship

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2006**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on April 1, 2006**

III. **CV Anesthesiology Division**
  - 3 years Residency in General Anesthesia accredited by PBA (Board eligible)

IV. **Pediatric Cardiovascular Medicine Department**
  - 3 years Residency in General Pediatric accredited by PPS
  - at least passed written examination for Diplomate in Pediatrics

V. **Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Division**
  - 4 years Residency in General Surgery accredited by PCS (Board eligible)

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

RESIDENCIES : (For Medical Board Passers)

I. **Nuclear Medicine Section**
  - **Academic Graduates** – Medical School
  - **Medical Board Passer**

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

General Requirements:
1. Medical Diploma
2. Transcript of Records with the General Weighted Average
3. Itemized Board Rating
4. Three (3) Letters of Recommendation with at least one letter written by the Training Officer &/or Director of the previous Training Programs / duplicate letters or photocopies signed by different Doctors will not be accepted)
5. Four (4) pcs. 2"x2" colored picture

Please address your communications to:
ARISTIDES G. PANLILIO, M.D.
Department Manager II
Office of Education and Research
Philippine Heart Center
East Avenue, Quezon City

For further inquiries, please contact Ms. Carmela M. Ocasion or Ms. Cleopatra Q. Palencia with Tel. Nos. 925-2401 locals 3234, 3235, 3236 & 3237 and Telefax 926-9622 or you can email to oer@phc.gov.ph

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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CONTRACTOR 0917-8463228

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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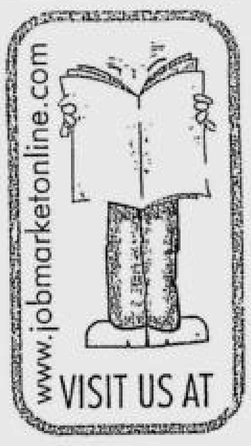

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OBITUARIES

Adrian Santamaria Romero

September 12, 1954 - December 24, 2005

Died in the Peace of the Lord
at the age of 51 after receiving the Last Sacraments.

His bereaved wife **Pauline Tan Romero**, his children:
Arienne & **Jing**, **Bianca**; grandchildren: **Danielle**, **Luis** and **Joshua**;
parents, **Javier Opisso Romero** (†), **Fanny Ros Santamaria** (†);
siblings: **Denise**, **Javier Alfonso**, **Luis Miguel** & **Sampaguita**, & **Francine**.

Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at La Capilla de la Virgen, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park.
Interment will be on Wednesday, December 28, 2005 after the 9:00 am Requiem Mass.

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**
Subsection Editor **Lito B. Zulueta**

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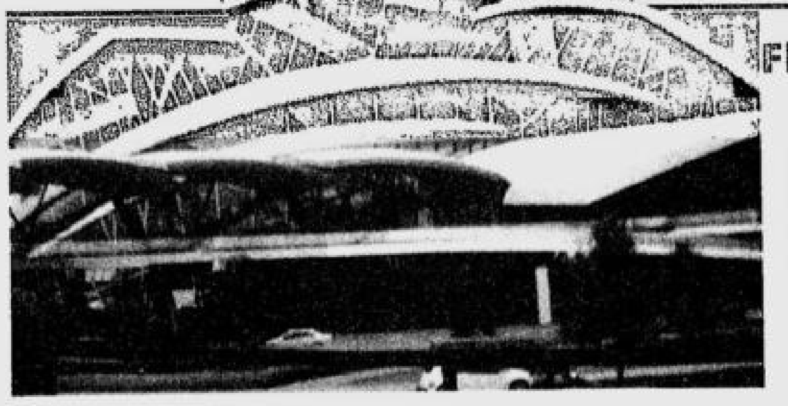
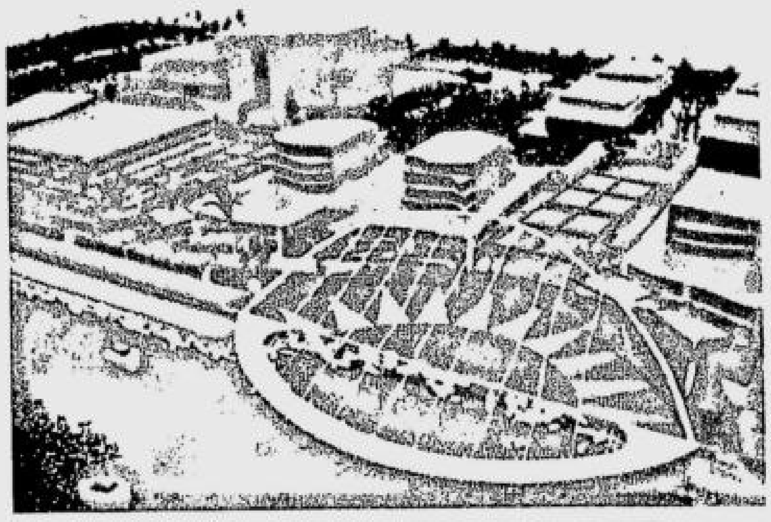
*Approved by DTI-NCR
GMA



CCP design winners bared



MTIA design (above) and JPA Buensalido design (upper left)

UNIVERSITY of Sto. Tomas' Alfonzo, Arcones, David, Jimenez and Tibajia with their plaque and winning entry (Student Category)

THREE PROFESSIONAL design groups and seven teams of architecture students won the New Cultural Center of the Philippines District Design Excellence Competition of the National Committee on Architecture and the Allied Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, CCP, and Philippine Association of Landscape Architects.

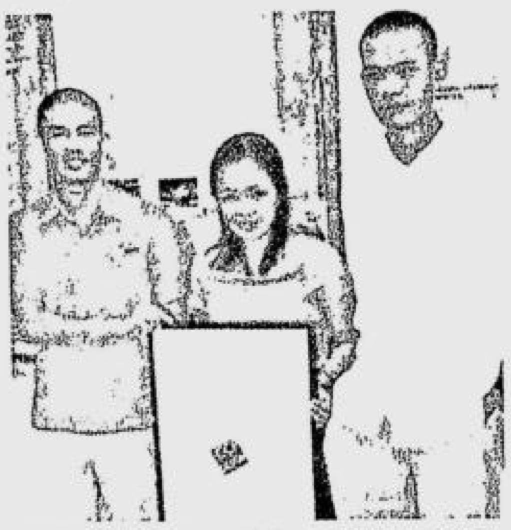
Winners in the professional category are: Syndicated Architects (Cesar Rizaldy de los Reyes, Anthony Niven Juanga and Efren Aurelio); Manalang-Tayag-Ilano Architects (Miguel Tayag, Leonardo Ilano, Judy Tanzo, Edgar Natividad and Norman Mangawang); and JPA Buensalido Design Team (John Patrick Anthony Buensalido, Benson Go, Gerard Michael Dy and John Granda).

Winners in the student category are: University of Santo Tomas (Adrian Lorenzo Alfonso, Gian Arcones, Keith Bryan David, Chris Anthony Jimenez and Carlo Lorenzo Tibajia); UST (Virlin Alcantara, Marie Veronique Boncan, Justin Cruz, Jean Paul Peteza and Maria Diwata Reyes); Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (Ronnie Lucena, Raul Andrino, Jonathan Bautista, Arias-Nidez Escondo and Jovencio Lagman); UST (Mark Anthony Baquir, Vincent Rinaldo Cabochan, William Kevin Chua, Joan Adda Ling and Kellyn Ann See); University of the Philippines (Patrick Brian Angco, Andrea Marie Dizon, Gelyn Elizalde, Julius Garrido and Cristina Margarita Lozano); Ateneo de Davao University (Rojel Bob and Chummy Lloyd Boholst); and UP (Rodel Demafelis, Geraween Paz and Kristoffer Lobregat).

Each professional design group received P100,000 cash and a plaque of recognition. Each student group received P40,000 cash and a plaque of recognition; the school received P10,000.

The CCP Design Contest was launched last May to visualize the new district as a center for the arts and culture in Asia and the centerpiece of artistic expression of the Filipino soul. The contest likewise sought to revitalize the architecture and design sector.

The design drawings and scale models by the finalists and winners are featured in an exhibit titled "Prospects," curated by architect-artist Sid Gomez Hildawa, at the CCP main gallery, until Jan. 15, 2006. Call 8323702.



UNIVERSITY of the Philippines' Demafelis, Paz and Lobreyat team with their plaque of recognition

MEMBERS of the JPA Buensalido Design Team, one of the winners in the Professional Category, explain their entry.

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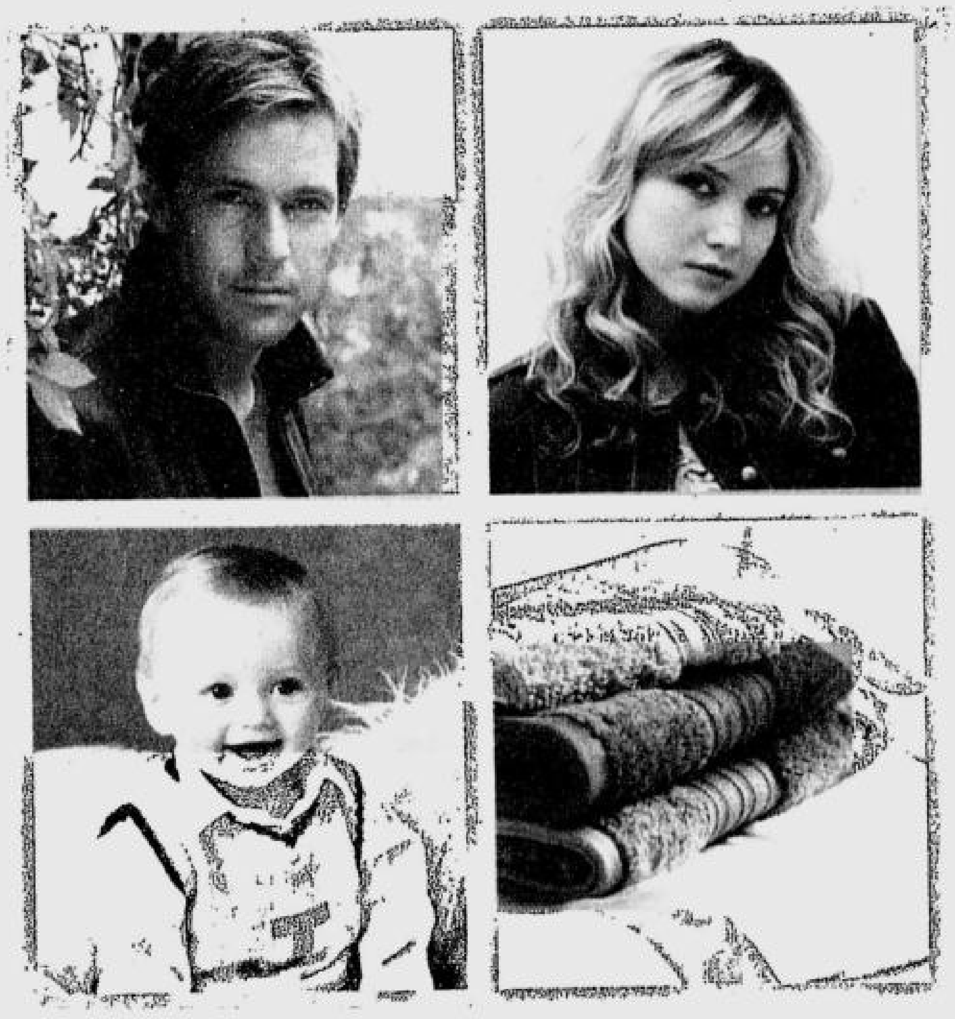

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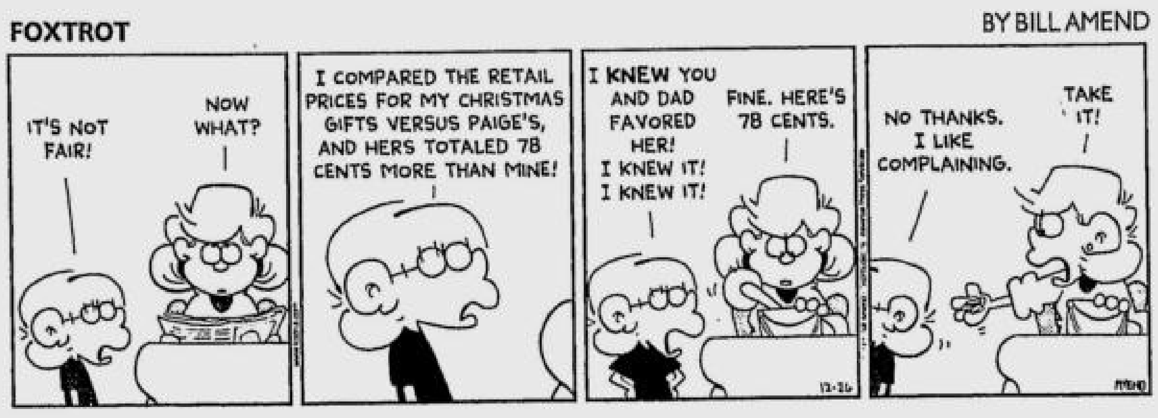
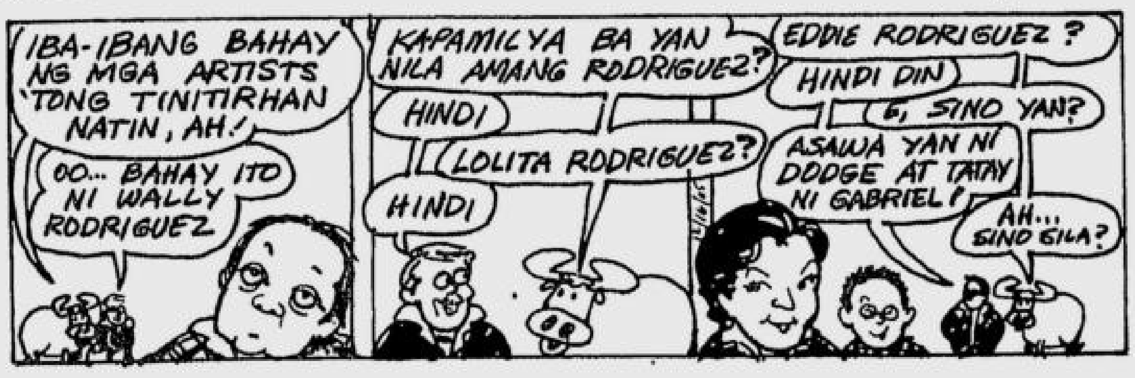
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


IT'S NOT FAIR!
NOW WHAT?
I COMPARED THE RETAIL PRICES FOR MY CHRISTMAS GIFTS VERSUS PAIGE'S, AND HERS TOTALED 78 CENTS MORE THAN MINE!
I KNEW YOU AND DAD FAVORED HER! I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT!
FINE. HERE'S 78 CENTS.
NO THANKS. I LIKE COMPLAINING.
TAKE IT!
12-26
AMEND

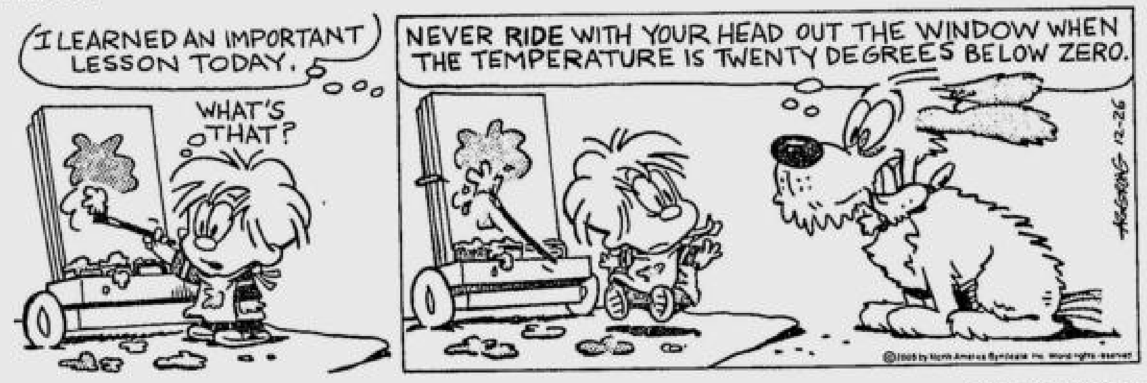
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


IBA-IBANG BAHAY NG MGA ARTISTS 'TONG TINITIRHAN NATIN, AH!
OO... BAHAY ITO NI WALLY RODRIGUEZ
KAPAMILYA BA YAN NILA AMANG RODRIGUEZ?
HINDI
LOLITA RODRIGUEZ?
HINDI
EDDIE RODRIGUEZ?
HINDI DIN
E, SINO YAN?
ASAWA YAN NI DODGE AT TATAY NI GABRIEL!
AH... SINO SILA?

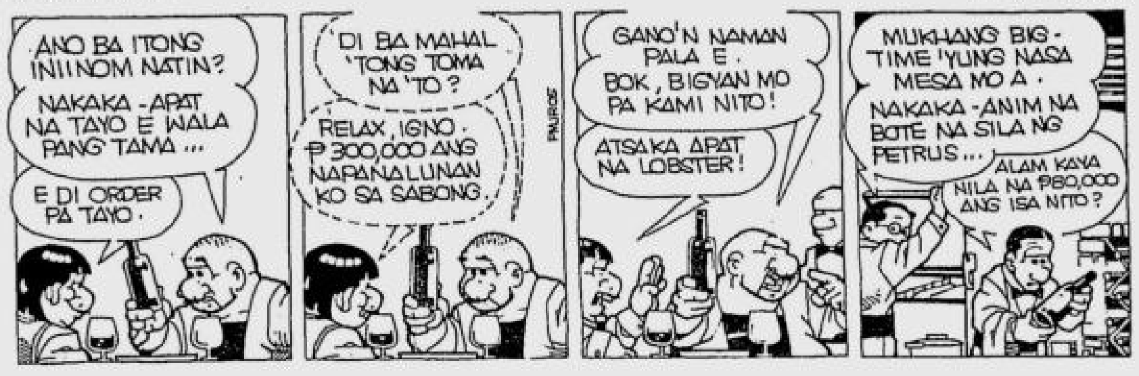
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I LEARNED AN IMPORTANT LESSON TODAY.
WHAT'S THAT?
NEVER RIDE WITH YOUR HEAD OUT THE WINDOW WHEN THE TEMPERATURE IS TWENTY DEGREES BELOW ZERO.
ARMSTRONG 12-26

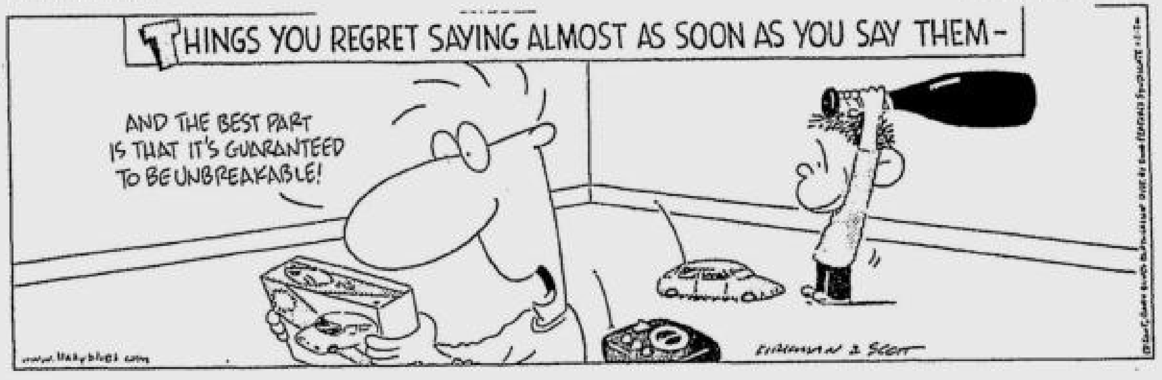
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANO BA ITONG INIINOM NATIN?
NAKAKA-APAT NA TAYO E WALA PANG TAMA ...
E DI ORDER PA TAYO.
DI BA MAHAL 'TONG TOMA NA 'TO?
RELAX, IGNO. ₱300,000 ANG NAPANALUNAN KO SA SABONG.
GANO'N NAMAN PALA E. BOK, BIGYAN MO PA KAMI NITO!
ATSAKA APAT NA LOBSTER!
MUKHANG BIG-TIME 'YUNG NASA MESA MO A. NAKAKA-ANIM NA BOTE NA SILA NG PETRUS...
ALAM KAYA NILA NA ₱80,000 ANG ISA NITO?

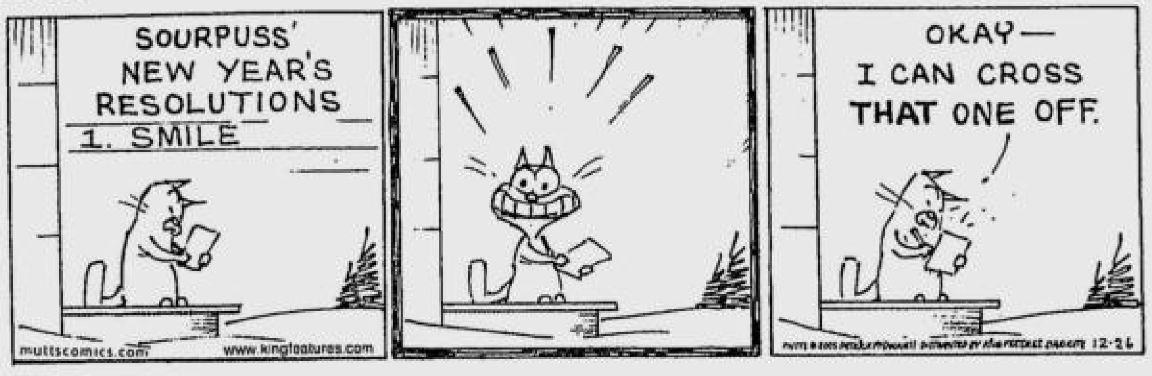
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING ALMOST AS SOON AS YOU SAY THEM—
AND THE BEST PART IS THAT IT'S GUARANTEED TO BE UNBREAKABLE!
www.babyblues.com
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

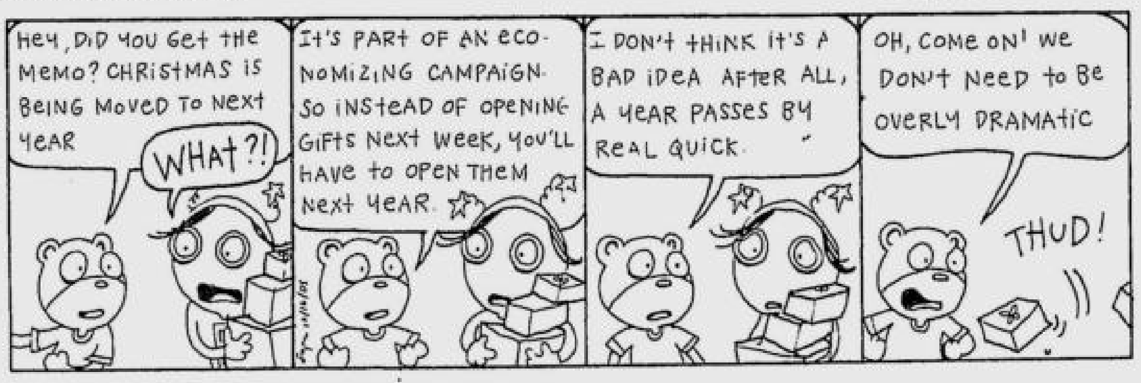
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SOURPUSS' NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
1. SMILE
OKAY— I CAN CROSS THAT ONE OFF.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
12-26

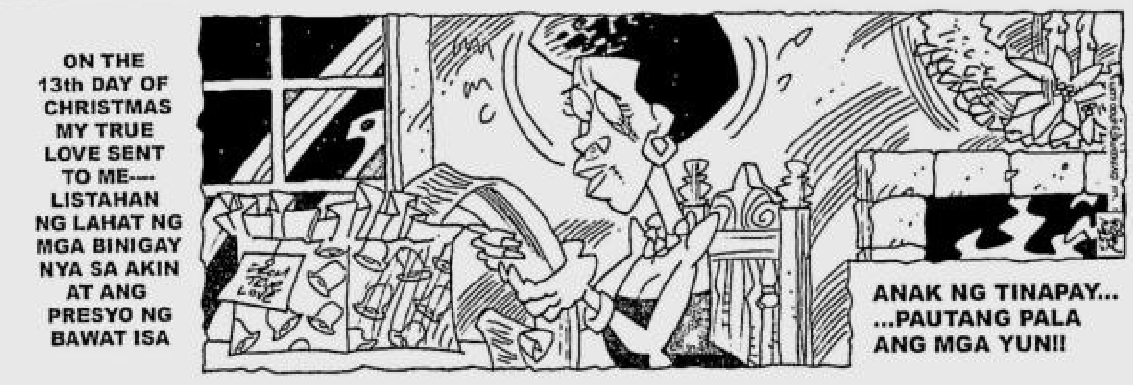
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, DID you Get the Memo? CHRISTMAS is Being Moved To Next year
WHAT?!
It's Part of An eco-nomizing campaign. So instead of opening Gifts Next week, you'll have to open them Next year.
I Don't think it's a Bad idea after all, a year passes by real quick.
Oh, Come on! we Don't need to Be overly Dramatic
THUD!

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ON THE 13th DAY OF CHRISTMAS MY TRUE LOVE SENT TO ME---- LISTAHAN NG LAHAT NG MGA BINIGAY NYA SA AKIN AT ANG PRESYO NG BAWAT ISA
ANAK NG TINAPAY... ...PAUTANG PALA ANG MGA YUN!!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're highly talented. What makes you successful is that you take this talent and work hard with it. Some of you are quite rebellious. Yet you're on the fringe of what's going on in society. You're great with details! You think out-of-the-box. In the year ahead, you're entering a new nine-year cycle. Open any door. Birthdate of: Jared Leto, actor; Carlton Fisk, baseball player; Steve Allen, entertainer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel financially squeezed today. You might be concerned about who owns what. Don't worry. This is small stuff. You'll work out the details.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Be extra-patient when dealing with partners and friends today. Conflict might arise about family issues, especially authority matters connected with parents. Stay mellow.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Tension with co-workers might arise today. Basically, this is a good time for you to learn to compromise with the values of others. This might or might not apply to your situation at work.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Activities with children often test one's patience. This simply goes with the territory. Don't let little things ruin your peace of mind. Take the high road.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Authority figures, parents and teachers might make demands on your time today. Be cooperative. That is your easiest option. After all, life is short, so you might as well enjoy yourself.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is a mildly accident-prone day. Take extra care in everything you do. Slow down. Don't rush. Give yourself enough time to do everything.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Be careful about money matters today. Don't do anything impulsive. Don't force an issue. Be prepared to compromise with others. Listen to what people want.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Conflict with close friends and partners is possible today. Knowing this, you might as well be patient so that things can flow as easily as possible, right? Be friendly. Be tolerant. Be kind.

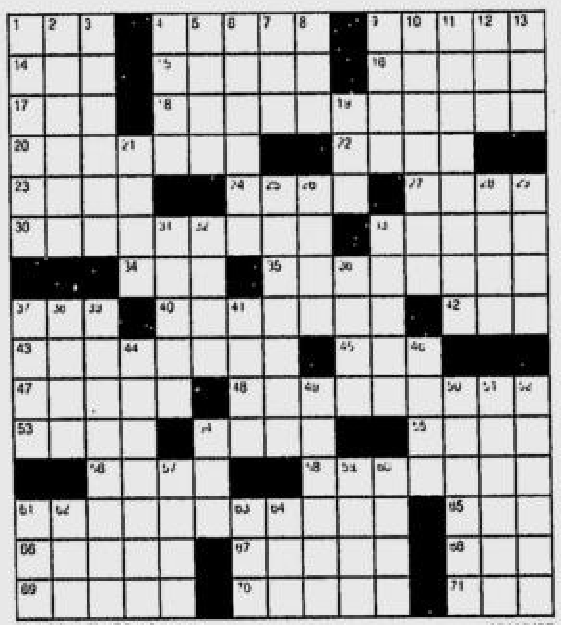
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't react to the criticism of others. Perhaps it's not even intended! Today, what others say seems to confirm your worst suspicions about yourself. (This isn't true.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might disagree with a friend or a group today. Unless it's very important, I suggest you let it go. It's hard to get people to agree with things today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Be polite with authority figures today. You might want to contradict your boss, parent or teacher. (Not a good idea. Save your volley for another day.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're very restless today. You want something different to happen. This desire could make you impatient with daily routine. You might also feel impatient with others. Try to mellow out.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
12/26/05

ACROSS
1 Ed.'s work pile
4 "State of the Union" director
9 Smart-mouthed
14 Crowd fig.
15 Free-trade org. based in Jakarta
16 Conjure
17 Patriotic org.
18 Start of Pierre Corneille quote
20 More boorish
22 Element ref.
23 80-year-old prefix
24 Pequod captain
27 Russian river
30 Part 2 of quote
33 Hosiery shade
34 Weep audibly
35 Counterstrokes
37 Voltage: abbr.
40 Part 3 of quote
42 Positive answer
43 Whirlwinds
45 Fifth of MV
47 Attach with ropes
48 Part 4 of quote
53 Actor Baldwin
54 Feudal serf
55 With, in Paris
56 "Why __ Thou forsaken me?"
58 Cloying
61 End of quote
65 "7 Faces of Doctor _"
66 Fortified hill town in Spain
67 Blue-and-white pottery
68 Wind dir.
69 Biblical witch's home
70 Attire
71 Part of CST

DOWN
1 Bovine disease
2 Stiffening agent
3 Foglike clouds
4 Webber hit
5 Tennis great
6 Study intently
7 St. Louis pro
8 Literary collection
9 E-mail confirmation
10 Thoroughfares
11 College organization
12 Schuss
13 Longing
19 Grab hold of
21 Pouchlike parts
25 Takes the job
26 Month in the Hindu calendar
28 "A Death in the Family" author
29 Fewer
31 Hulk of wrestling
32 Footnote abbr.
33 Eerie Dutch artist
36 Ancient Briton
37 Kett of old comics
38 Work hard
39 Kind of drawing
41 Pledges
44 That's out of the question!
46 Mosque prayer leader
49 Redecorate the bathroom
50 Prefertilization seeds
51 Disavow
52 Reverberated
54 Old English letter
57 Headliner
59 Switch positions
60 Ed and Mel of baseball
61 Uno e due
62 Sweet 'ums
63 Roush or Byrnes
64 Fr. neighbor

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	H	A	R	E	■	S	U	B	S	T	R	A	T	A
T	O	T	A	L	■	A	N	A	T	O	M	I	E	S
A	B	O	D	E	■	T	I	D	E	M	A	R	K	S
P	A	N	I	C	K	Y	■	S	A	E	■	E	T	E
E	R	E	C	T	O	R	■	E	L	I	■	D	I	S
S	T	R	A	I	N	■	M	E	T	■	O	A	T	S
■	■	■	L	O	G	■	E	D	H	■	G	L	E	E
E	A	T	I	N	■	B	E	S	■	B	L	E	S	S
S	I	R	S	■	S	I	T	■	N	E	E	■	■	■
P	R	A	M	■	W	A	S	■	E	N	T	R	A	P
O	D	D	■	B	O	S	■	M	A	C	H	E	T	E
U	R	U	■	R	L	S	■	A	P	R	O	P	O	S
S	O	C	I	A	L	I	S	T	■	O	R	A	N	T
E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	E	■	S	P	I	C	E
D	E	R	R	I	N	G	D	O	■	S	E	D	E	R

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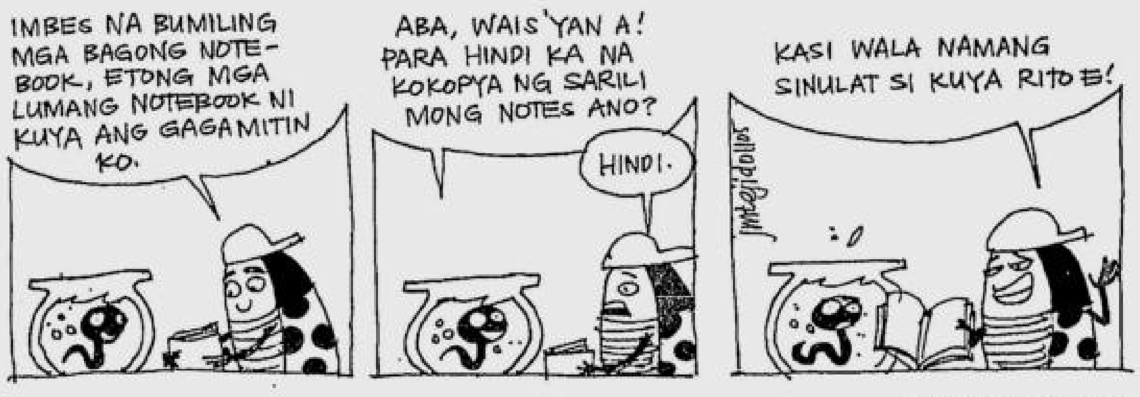
12/23/05

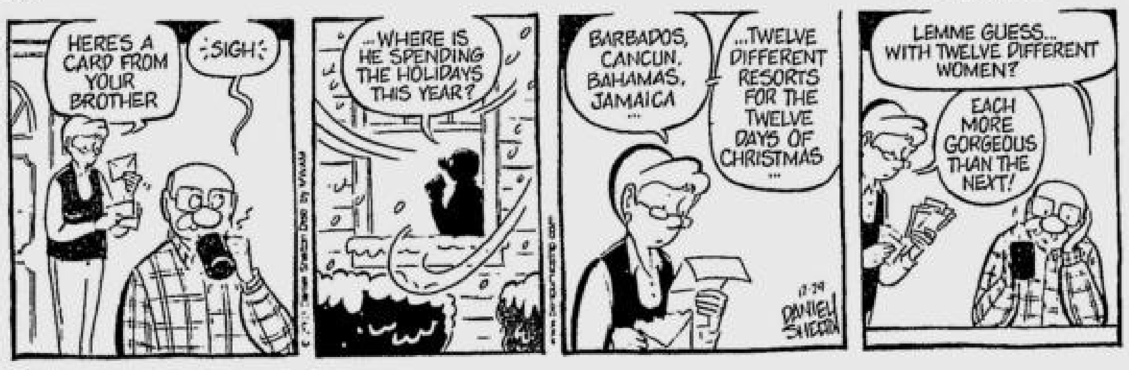
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


IMBES NA BUMILING MGA BAGONG NOTEBOOK, ETONG MGA LUMANG NOTEBOOK NI KUYA ANG GAGAMITIN KO.
ABA, WAIS 'YAN A! PARA HINDI KA NA KOKOPYA NG SARILI MONG NOTES ANO?
HINDI.
KASI WALA NAMANG SINULAT SI KUYA RITO E!
jomtejido

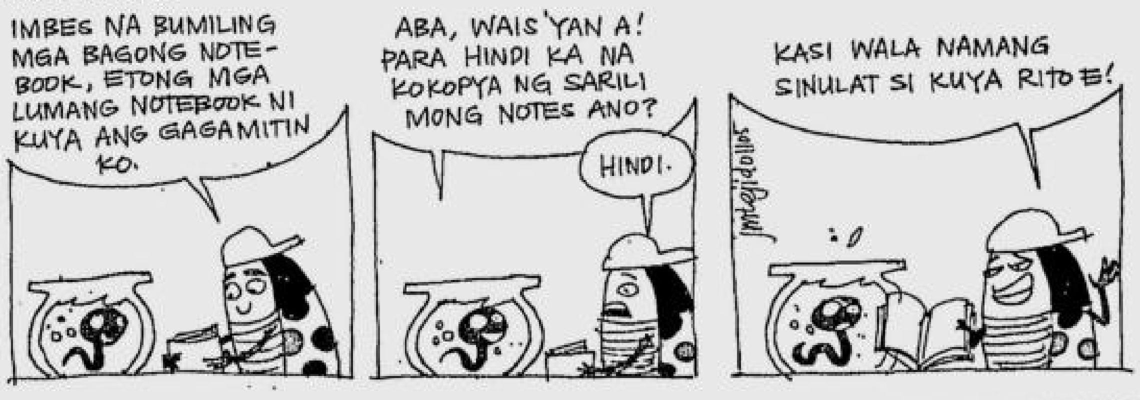
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HERES A CARD FROM YOUR BROTHER
:SIGH:
...WHERE IS HE SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS THIS YEAR?
BARBADOS, CANCUN, BAHAMAS, JAMAICA ...
...TWELVE DIFFERENT RESORTS FOR THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS ...
LEMME GUESS... WITH TWELVE DIFFERENT WOMEN?
EACH MORE GORGEOUS THAN THE NEXT!
DANIEL SHELTON

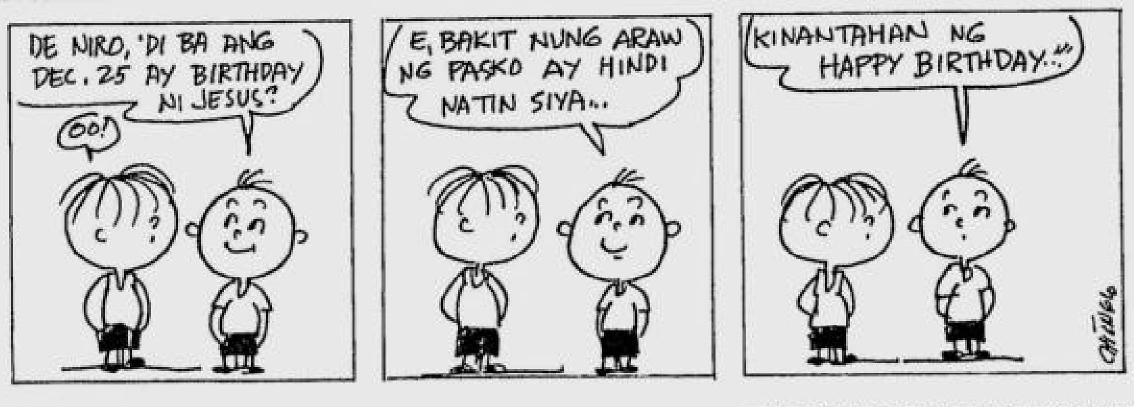
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


IMBES NA BUMILING MGA BAGONG NOTEBOOK, ETONG MGA LUMANG NOTEBOOK NI KUYA ANG GAGAMITIN KO.
ABA, WAIS 'YAN A! PARA HINDI KA NA KOKOPYA NG SARILI MONG NOTES ANO?
HINDI.
KASI WALA NAMANG SINULAT SI KUYA RITO E!
jomtejido

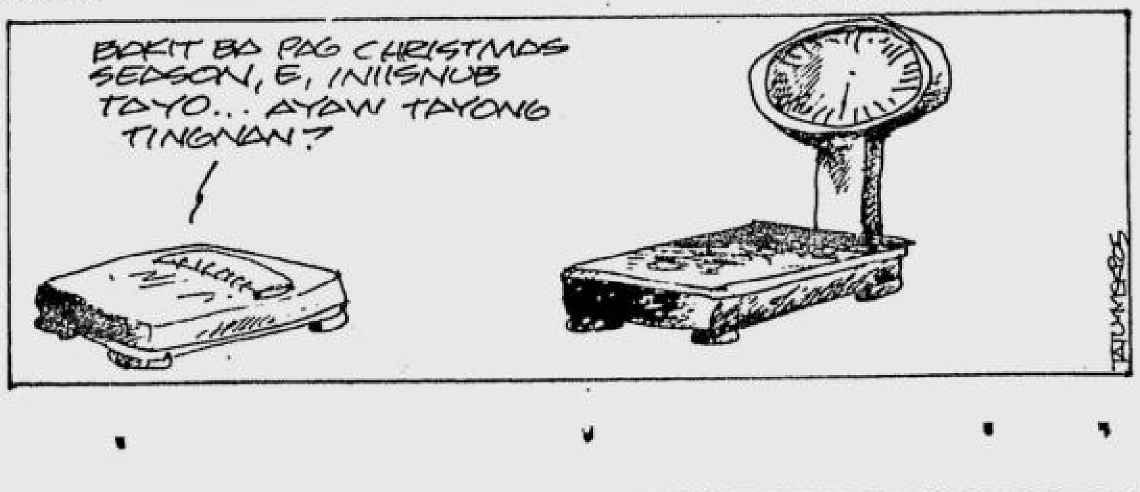
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

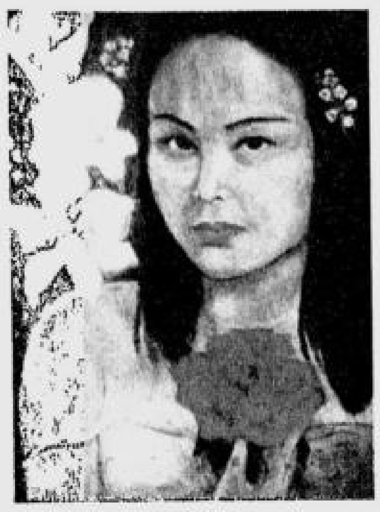

DE NIRO, 'DI BA ANG DEC. 25 AY BIRTHDAY NI JESUS?
OO!
E, BAKIT NUNG ARAW NG PASKO AY HINDI NATIN SIYA...
KINANTAHAN NG HAPPY BIRTHDAY..!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


BAKIT BA PAG CHRISTMAS SEASON, E, INIISNUB TAYO... AYAW TAYONG TINGNAN?
TATUM/PAPU

Wuzela's florals and portraits



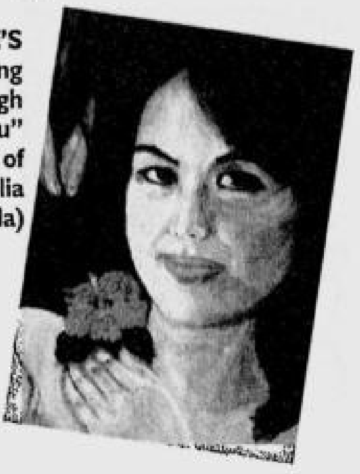
"THE RED Rose" (Portrait of Krie Lopez)

LILY AVILA-WUZELA'S DEBUT SHOW, "Flores et Femina," features florals and portraits of women at the lobby of the Amorsolo Building, Rockwell Club, Makati City.

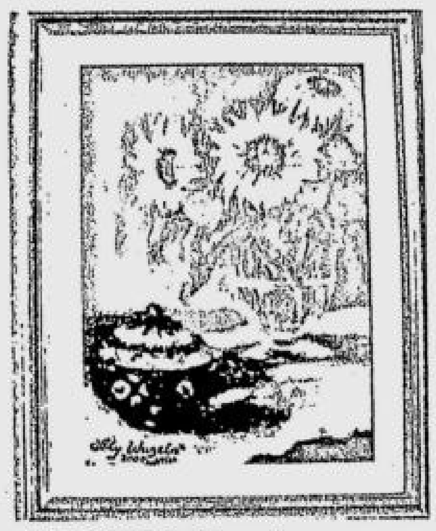
In exuberant expressionist style, the acrylic works include portraits of Nini Layug, Mariel Dionisio and Caecilia Gironella, as well as ordinary womenfolk of Indonesia and Austria, where the artist, who's married to an Austrian engineer, has travelled.

The floral subjects are caught in natural settings, suffused with varied emotional states.

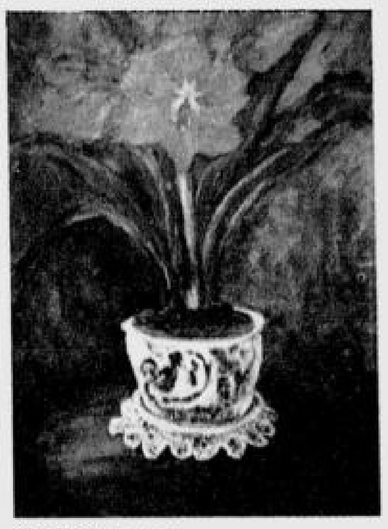
The show is organized by Hiraya Gallery. It will run until Dec. 26. Call 0917-8165723.



"HERE'S Looking Through You" (Portrait of Caecilia Gironella)



"SUNSHINE in Vienna"



"RED Majesty"

The art of very small painting

By Constantino C. Tejero

UPON SEEING THE BANAUE RICE Terraces, other artists would have exploded into epic visions of earth, man and sky. Not Gregory Raymond Halili. After a trip to Cordillera, he imploded and created a series of miniature paintings the size of postage stamps.

The artist traversed the mountain range from Banaue to Batad to Bontoc to Sagada, and met the people of the North. The intensity of the experience must be such that the artist closed in on himself and his vision just had to be concentrated into portraits ranging in size from 1" x 1.5" to 1.5" x 2".

Miniaturism isn't new but a miniaturist is very rare to find these days. It is in this light that we appreciate the importance of Halili as artist.

This young man seems to be the only one miniaturist remaining in the country today. Not only does he turn up miniatures of consistently exquisite quality, but he also does it obsessively, exhibit after exhibit.

An art since the Middle Ages (called "historia" then), which started flourishing during the Renaissance (called "limning" by the Elizabethans), portrait miniature became a vogue in the country at one time, as can be gleaned from those extant *letras y figuras*, medallions, lockets, cameos and pendants from the Spanish colonial period.

One may wonder how art can be fully appreciated this way. Naturally, viewers in Halili's shows are provided with magnifying glasses. The real wonder should be how art could be created this way with flying colors.

Viewing this kind of art is a triple treat. First is the pleasant surprise upon seeing the artworks perching like moths on the wall. Then there's the exquisite pleasure from the incredulity and wonderment on seeing a wealth of colors and forms unfolding under a magnifying glass.

Virtuoso technique

But this art of very small painting was "virtually killed as a serious art form" with the coming of photography. In fact, we seldom encounter anyone practicing it nowadays unless it be for some art competition.

Viewing the pieces with the aid of a magnifying glass, one can't help wondering why the artist didn't just paint the subject on standard-size bond paper, thus sparing both himself and the viewer the trouble. The technique seems wrongheaded.

In his latest show at Ayala Museum, however, Halili has finally found a medium to which his passion for the miniature and his virtuoso technique are eminently suited. This time he painted his portraits in watercolor on ivory encased in antique jewelry—and the viewer feels it couldn't have been painted anywhere else.

The exhibit "Relicarios" runs until Dec. 29 in MuseumSpace, 2/F, Glass Wing, Ayala Museum, Makati Avenue cor. De la Rosa Street, Greenbelt Park, Ayala Center, Makati City.

The exhibit's title may mean "keepsake or memento," "relic," or "heirloom." Here it refers to those lockets worn by women of a bygone era, containing both religious and secular images.

Says the exhibit's information sheet: "In the Philippines, *relicarios* were created in a wide variety of styles, techniques and materials. Homemade *relicarios* were fashioned of simple frames of tin, brass and wood, even silver and gold, and protected by glass or crystal. As crude as they often were, they nevertheless served their owners' special devotional purposes and were much treasured by them."

In Halili's take on the *relicario*, it has become a time machine—"capsules of love and devotion, containing and preserving Philippine history and culture."

Here he has limned the Madonna, the Santo Niño, Mater Dolorosa, Santo Cristo, and several 19th-century Filipino women in *baro't saya, terno*, Maria Clara. These portraits, awash in warm earth tones, are depicted in both front and back views.

Each piece has the characteristic elegance and vividness realized by Halili's unerring use of line and exquisite detailing. In the tradition of celebrated English miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard, he has imparted to each portrait miniature that "intimacy and subtlety peculiar to the art."

Jewellike quality

A full appreciation of Halili's skill in portraiture could be experienced in his previous "Homage to the People of the Philippine Cordillera" II, 10 pieces in watercolor on paper, recently in West Gallery at the Artwalk at SM Megamall.

The artist's deep admiration for those hardy and rough-hewn folk obviously shows, or he wouldn't take all pains to lovingly limn their faces on these bits of paper. Inspired by the photographs of Eduardo Masferre, each miniature portrait is flecked with gold dust to give the subject "a jewellike quality and fragility."

"A portrait tells almost everything about a person, and yet he is still a mystery," says Halili. "The physical characteristics of a human face and our emotions are extraordinary."

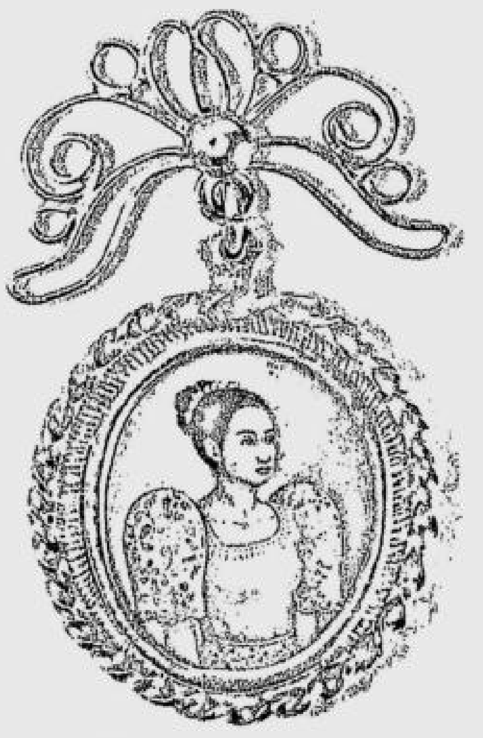
These are sharp images in rich earth tones. The contours are properly shaded. The perspective is right. And yet there's still space for fine details and design elements.

In "Kalinga Woman" 2, the alternating bands of yellow, red and blue of the woman's bracelets have been vividly rendered, plus her braided necklaces and earrings, plus the gold and orange stripes of her skirt. And still there's the impression of open space left, in the background of ethnic weave in stripes of orange, gold, blue and beige.

In "Old Ifugao Man" 2, one can only wonder if the artist did count how many rooster's tail-feathers should go to the man's headdress, or how many beads to the strands of his necklaces.

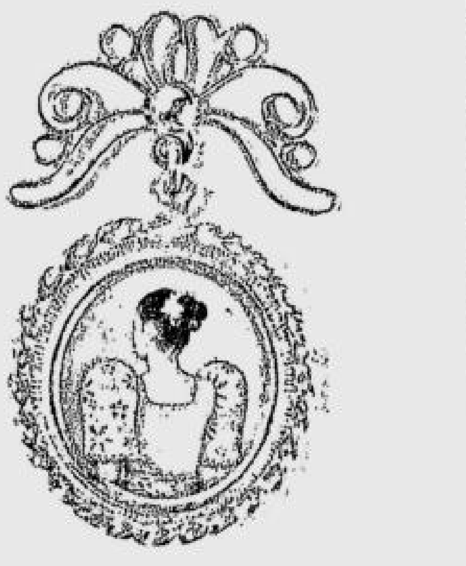
Halili received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from University of the Arts in Philadelphia. A Filipino-American, he perennially visits the land of his birth, where he finds the source and strength of his art.

"The Philippines for me is the land of my birth and my homeland," he says. "I feel a symbolic umbilical cord to be part of this country, no matter if I'm a Filipino-American living in the US. The art shows I hold here are the fruits of those memories, which I'm deeply proud to show."

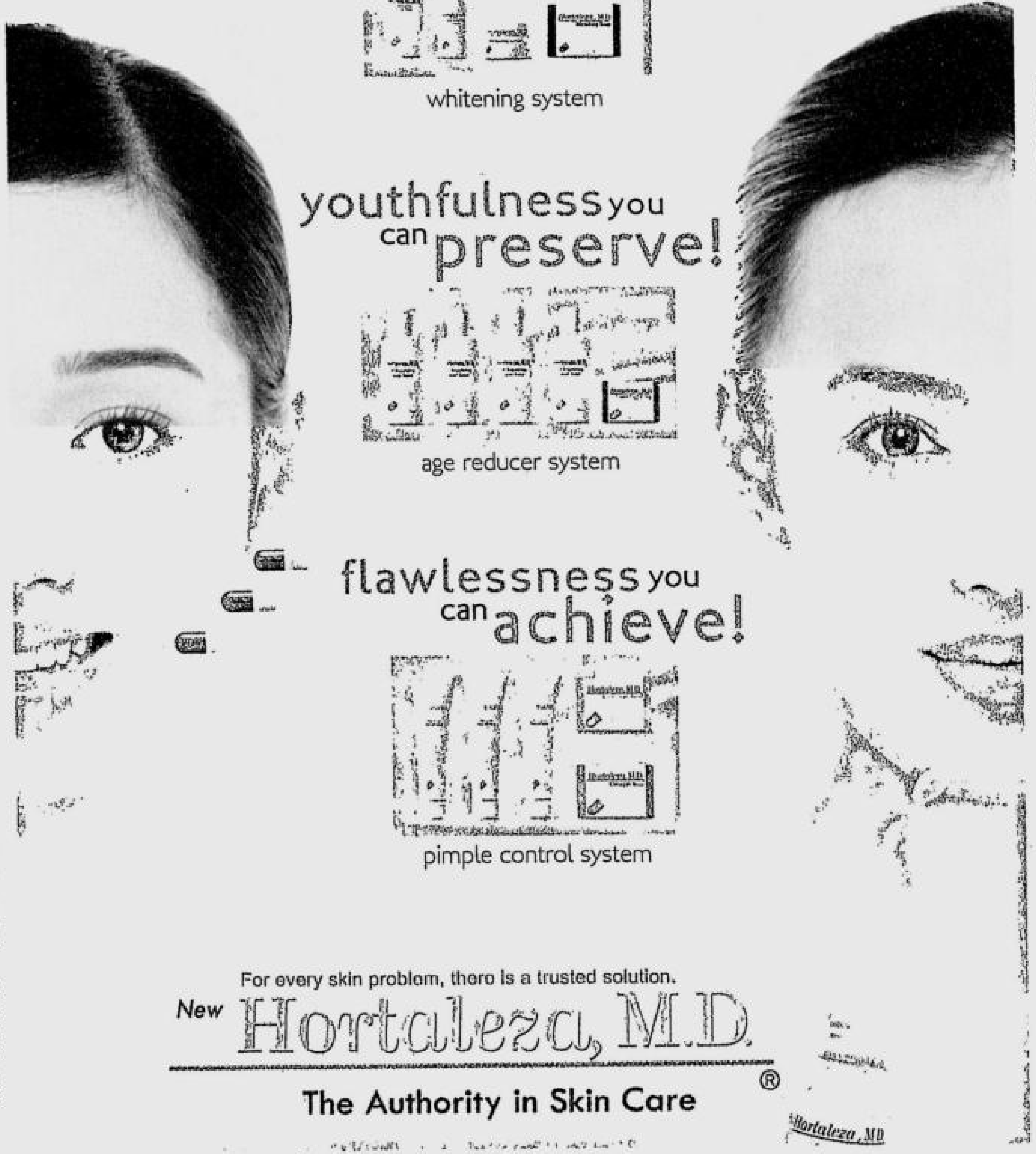


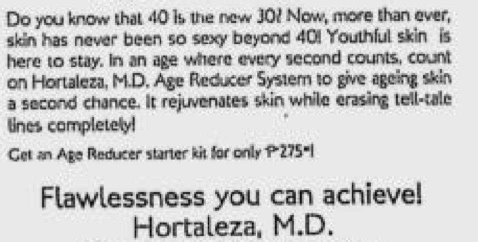
"FILIPINA" 7 (front)

> There's the exquisite pleasure from seeing a wealth of colors and forms unfolding under a magnifying glass



"FILIPINA" 7 (back)





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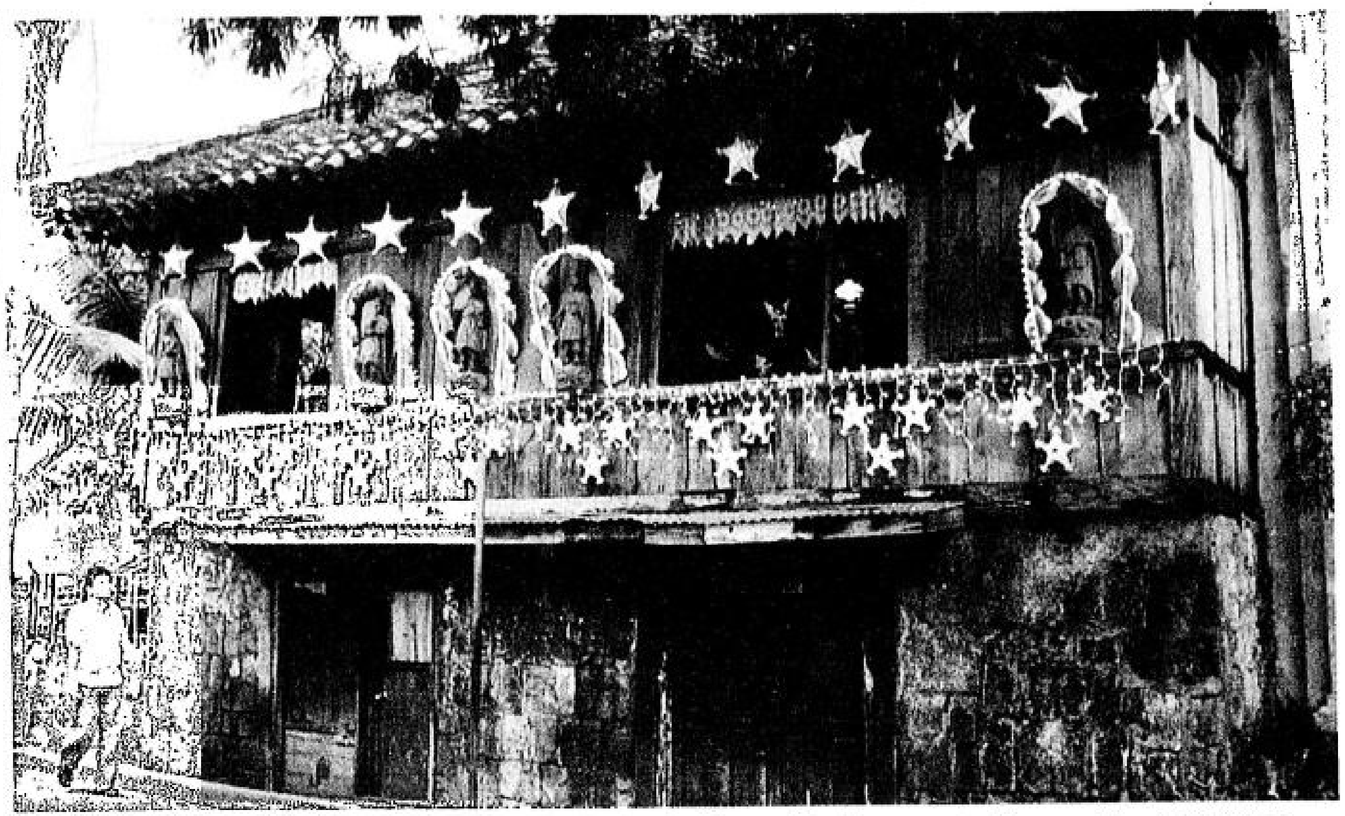
THREE Wise Men astride their camels wait outside the Cathedral for Mass to finish.

Cebu revives Parian Christmas tradition



ONE of the oldest surviving houses in Cebu's Parian district, the Mancao-Sandiego ancestral house, shines in Christmas finery.

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

AFTER SPEEDING ON high gear throughout the year, we need Christmas to slow down and recharge. It is the time for returning to family and friends, and going back to the familiar rituals and traditions that reconnect us to our roots.

I reconnected with my Cebuano roots last Dec. 16 when I attended a revival of an old Christmas tradition in Cebu's Parian district.

The Parian of Cebu was once a residential district in the center of the city that focused on its main street, Calle Colón, said to be the oldest street in the country.

The district survived many identity transformations. Beginning as a ghetto of Chinese merchants established toward the end of the 16th century, the Parian district evolved into a market and trading center.

As the center of Cebuano business activity, the Parian peaked in the late 19th as the most prestigious section of the city, where the founding families of Cebu, mestizos of Chinese and Spanish origin, lived and worked.

Houses in the Parian were not simply dwellings. They were "substantial stone-and-wood houses that followed a distinct pattern: the solid, permanent-looking structure fronting the street, the *bodega* ground floor and the upper-floor living quarters with the often excessively large rooms, wide windows and *azoteas* that responded to the need for ventilation and the impulse toward gracious display... that spoke of the Hispanified lifestyle of the local *principalia*," writes noted Cebuano scholar Resil Mojares.

The vanished architecture in Cebu's Parian follows the shophouse tradition prevalent in most Chinese-influenced trading posts in Asia of the era like Pekalongan (Indonesia), Malacca (Malaysia), the Rattanakosin section of Bangkok, and Vigan (Philippines).

Entrepreneurial families conducted business and warehoused their merchandise or agricultural produce on the ground floor of their shophouses. Families lived on the second floor.

Today's Parian has become an inner-city, working-class neighborhood. The old families have all moved to other parts of the city, country and world, leaving behind their houses and their Parian lifestyle.

Only the former Gorordo family home (now maintained by the Ramón Aboitiz Foundation as the Casa Gorordo Museum), the Mancao-Sandiego House and the former Jesuit Residence (now a hardware warehouse) remain.

Kaguikan sa Parian, an association of descendants of the old Parian families that aims to reawaken Cebuanos to the history of Parian, joined the Ramón Aboitiz Foundation and the Barangays of Parian and Tinago to revive the Misa de Gallo procession, a forgotten Christmas tradition that originated in the Parian.

Joyful procession

For the nine days leading up to Christmas, a pre-dawn procession joyfully winds its way from Plaza Parian to Cebu Cathedral, reenacting the Nativity with neighborhood children taking part in the tableau. The procession street-dances its way to the cathedral.

Children bring life-size papier-mâché lambs and other animals. Boys compete for the honor of pulling the huge, life-size paper replicas of the Three Kings astride life-size camels along the streets to the cathedral.

Neighborhood bands march in the procession, each accompanying a choir of children singing traditional Cebuano Christmas carols.

After a festive Misa de Gallo in Cebu Cathedral, the procession returns to Plaza Parian to enjoy a traditional *painit* (snack) of Cebuano delicacies.

The Misa de Gallo procession is a neighborhood celebration where residents give thanks for the blessings received during the past year. More important, it is a celebration where bonds are strengthened—between neighbors, between current and former residents of the district, and, most significantly, between present and past.

Much of the credit for reviving the procession goes to Kaguikan sa Parian, but its moving spirit is Val Sandiego, who traces his roots to Parian families, Mancao-Sandiego.

Val researched the Misa de Gallo tradition, conceptualized the entire procession, and trained the neighborhood children who participated in it.

There was a feel of authenticity to the celebration. It was one participated in joyfully by residents, not an artificially conceived, well-rehearsed act simply for tourist consumption.

And to Val's credit, everyone had a good time. I certainly did and will definitely return for more next year.

"As a city moves through time and space, much of what it once was remains. Yet, much of what it can become is also expressed," observes Resil.

By reviving its past traditions, Kaguikan sa Parian teaches Cebu to express what it can become. It shows Cebuanos proudly living their heritage while firmly being on the forefront of 21st century life.

It looks like Kaguikan sa Parian is taking Cebu in a direction that I am proud to be a part of.

E-mail the author at afvillalon@hotmail.com

Renato Agustin Ong in 'Archaeology'

AFTER 10 YEARS, RENATO Agustin Ong is back on the art scene with "Archaeology," which tries to answer a question he has long wrestled with: How to build on the moment when art and craft meet in his work.

The result is an intriguing array of resin pots that have been inspired by archaeological finds. While he peels layers of age, so to speak, by recreating the prehistoric containers, Ong also reconstructs them in contemporary ways. He does something to them that bring together his past work as an artist and current concerns as a designer.

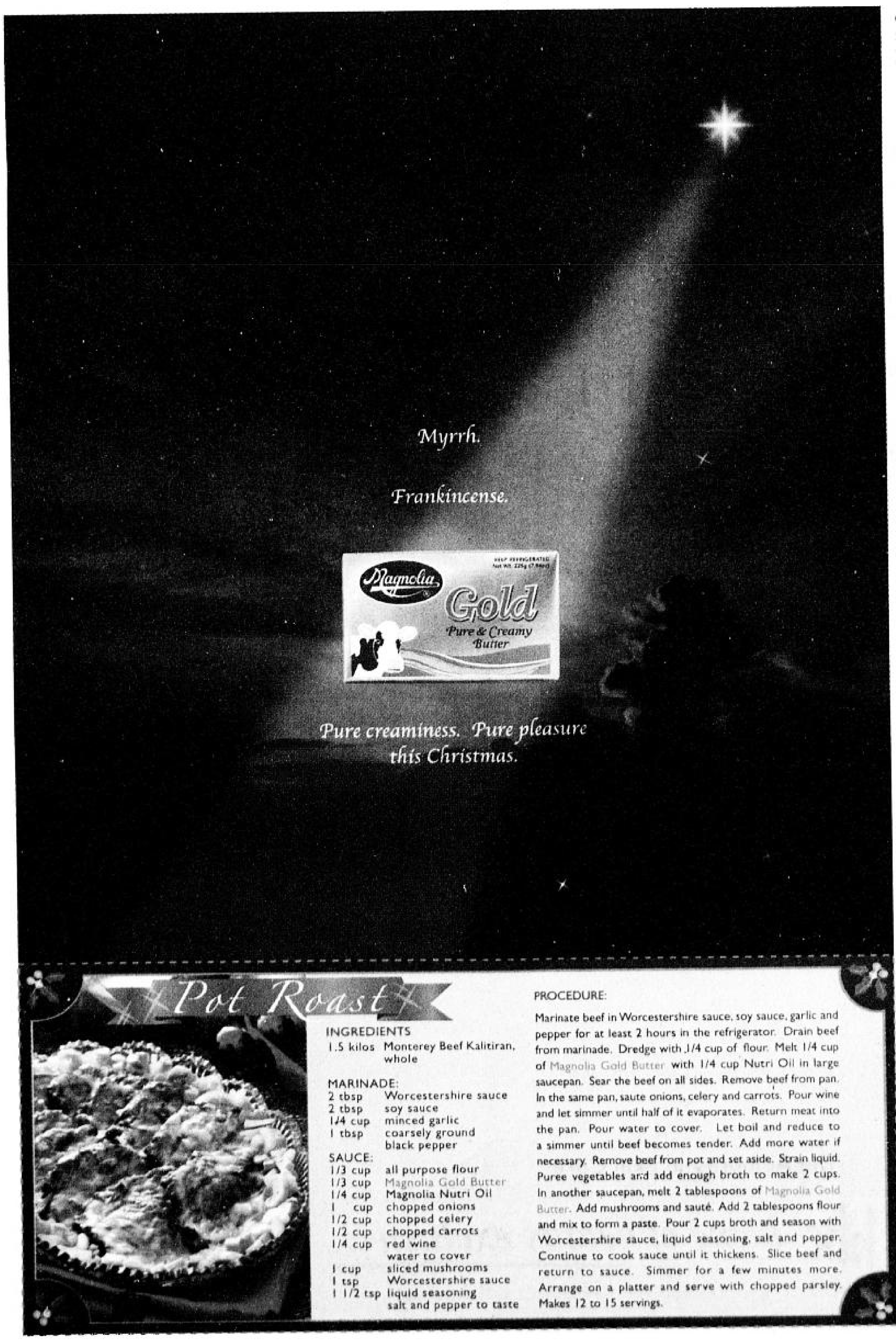
A graduate of Philippine Women's University, Ong's first solo exhibition, "Wagi," consisted of cast multiples of a sculpture that melded the body of a statue venerated by believers of a vernacular religion vis-à-vis the head of a saint from a Christian faith. This created a peculiar-looking icon that provided tension, rather than the desired seamless combination of two beliefs existing in many parts of the Philippines.

Having worked as a designer for his own company exporting resin-based fashion and lifestyle objects, Ong's attention was drawn to the idea that art and craft can exist together, as it has on his work for "Archaeology," although not necessarily translating to an easy mix.

In his case, Ong's work for an industry-driven context has now informed his art-making to the extent that his art inspires many of those he creates for export and vice versa.

The exhibit is ongoing at the UP Vargas Museum in Diliman. There's a concurrent exhibition at the Sanktuaryo Artshop and Coffeebar. Call 9281927.

SOCORRO C. Ramos of National Book Store leads the ribbon-cutting ceremony of Mandy Navasero's photo exhibit, "Celebrities Reading," composed of 26 well-known personalities at PowerBooks, 2/L, Greenbelt 4, Makati City; with physician Rebecca B. Singson, student Ariana L. Navasero, jazz singer Richard Merk and business author Francisco J. Colayco. On display until Jan. 3, 2006, it features photos of former President Fidel V. Ramos, pop diva Kuh Ledesma, actress-model Angel Aquino, Gina Lopez of Bantay Bata, Rina Lopez-Bautista of Knowledge Channel, and others.



INGREDIENTS

1.5 kilos	Monterey Beef Kalitiran, whole

MARINADE:

2 tbsp	Worcestershire sauce
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1/4 cup	minced garlic
1 tbsp	coarsely ground black pepper

SAUCE:

1/3 cup	all purpose flour
1/3 cup	Magnolia Gold Butter
1/4 cup	Magnolia Nutri Oil
1 cup	chopped onions
1/2 cup	chopped celery
1/2 cup	chopped carrots
1/4 cup	red wine
	water to cover
1 cup	sliced mushrooms
1 tsp	Worcestershire sauce
1 1/2 tsp	liquid seasoning
	salt and pepper to taste

PROCEDURE:

Marinate beef in Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, garlic and pepper for at least 2 hours in the refrigerator. Drain beef from marinade. Dredge with 1/4 cup of flour. Melt 1/4 cup of Magnolia Gold Butter with 1/4 cup Nutri Oil in large saucepan. Sear the beef on all sides. Remove beef from pan. In the same pan, saute onions, celery and carrots. Pour wine and let simmer until half of it evaporates. Return meat into the pan. Pour water to cover. Let boil and reduce to a simmer until beef becomes tender. Add more water if necessary. Remove beef from pot and set aside. Strain liquid. Puree vegetables and add enough broth to make 2 cups. In another saucepan, melt 2 tablespoons of Magnolia Gold Butter. Add mushrooms and sauté. Add 2 tablespoons flour and mix to form a paste. Pour 2 cups broth and season with Worcestershire sauce, liquid seasoning, salt and pepper. Continue to cook sauce until it thickens. Slice beef and return to sauce. Simmer for a few minutes more. Arrange on a platter and serve with chopped parsley. Makes 12 to 15 servings.

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'Noli Me Tangere' now

Rizal's masterpiece gets an interesting update

"Noli Me Tangere 2: Where to Now, My Country?"
By Rogelio Olivares
Hero Publishing

By Christian V. Esguerra

IT DOESN'T EXACTLY MEASURE UP TO the original but a new novel packaged as a sequel to "Noli Me Tangere" is more than enough to arouse curiosity.

In his book, US-based Filipino Rogelio Olivares takes on a much-talked-about theme very few have actually written about, at least in novel form: if Jose Rizal were alive today, what would be his thoughts?

Olivares, an Ateneo economics graduate and author of five other books, makes the bold attempt, situating Rizal's masterpiece in this time of excruciating poverty, crime and conflicts.

The novel is "Noli Me Tangere 2: Where to Now, My Country?" (Hero Publishing; tel. 4260294). The title and the exposition may somewhat lack subtlety, but the book has enough imagination to attract interest and sustain the reading.

In Olivares' world, Crisostomo Ibarra, Rizal's much traveled protagonist embodying the Filipino Everyman, is back, now as an idealistic and highly educated *balikbayan*.

He reintroduces Maria Clara as a poverty-stricken medical student living with her sister Rita in a shanty by the railroad on España Boulevard.

Together they take the place of Crispin and Basilio as the loving daughters of Sisa, again made insane by life's harsh realities. Here she's a former domestic helper who lost her wits after being forced into prostitution while working in Hong Kong.

One thing Rizal would not have imagined was to put Ibarra in a steamy encounter with Maria Clara's sister, a distraught 17-year-old escaping life as a private dancer.

Olivares smashes the incorruptibility of Ibarra's father, Rafael, in Rizal's "Noli." He transforms him from an honest retired police general who taught Ibarra honor and dignity into one of the country's biggest drug lords.

The moral tension between father and son may have been inspired by a forgettable Raymart Santiago flick back in the '90s.

Olivares sets up Ibarra, who would turn into an anti-narcotics agent, in a dramatic encounter with his father, the clash complete with cops and goons.

Social realism

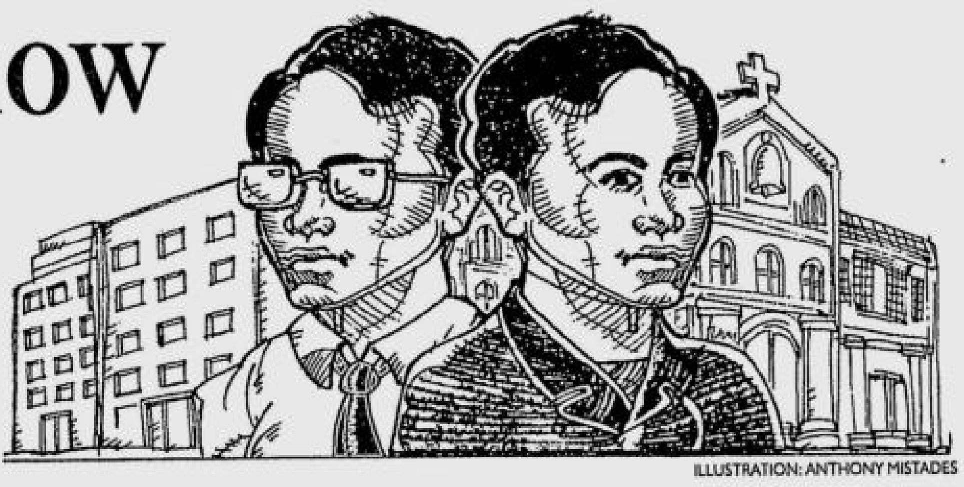
Olivares' "Noli" borrows much of its appeal from the social realism of the original. Where Rizal talked about the abuses of the Spaniards, Olivares tackles labor-export policy, political dynasties, corruption, violence, moral degeneration.

Come to think of it, Olivares's and Rizal's themes are not exactly different. Both works are relentless social commentaries that may prove to be good reading for politicians and policy-makers.

Rizal's "Noli" was descriptive, richly symbolic, if a tad didactic. Olivares' is talkative, not at all hiding the author's commentaries in dialogue and description. Perhaps some might have been better left unsaid.

Says Ibarra, selling his idea of a students-led march for national healing to his mentor Father Trinidad: "With this force of the enlightened middle class throughout the land, you will encourage idealistic, patriotic youth to go into politics; and this way, you can even break the hold of the scornful family dynasties in a democratic

'NOLI'/ D4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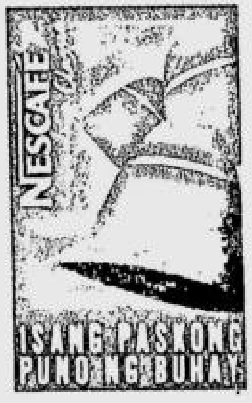
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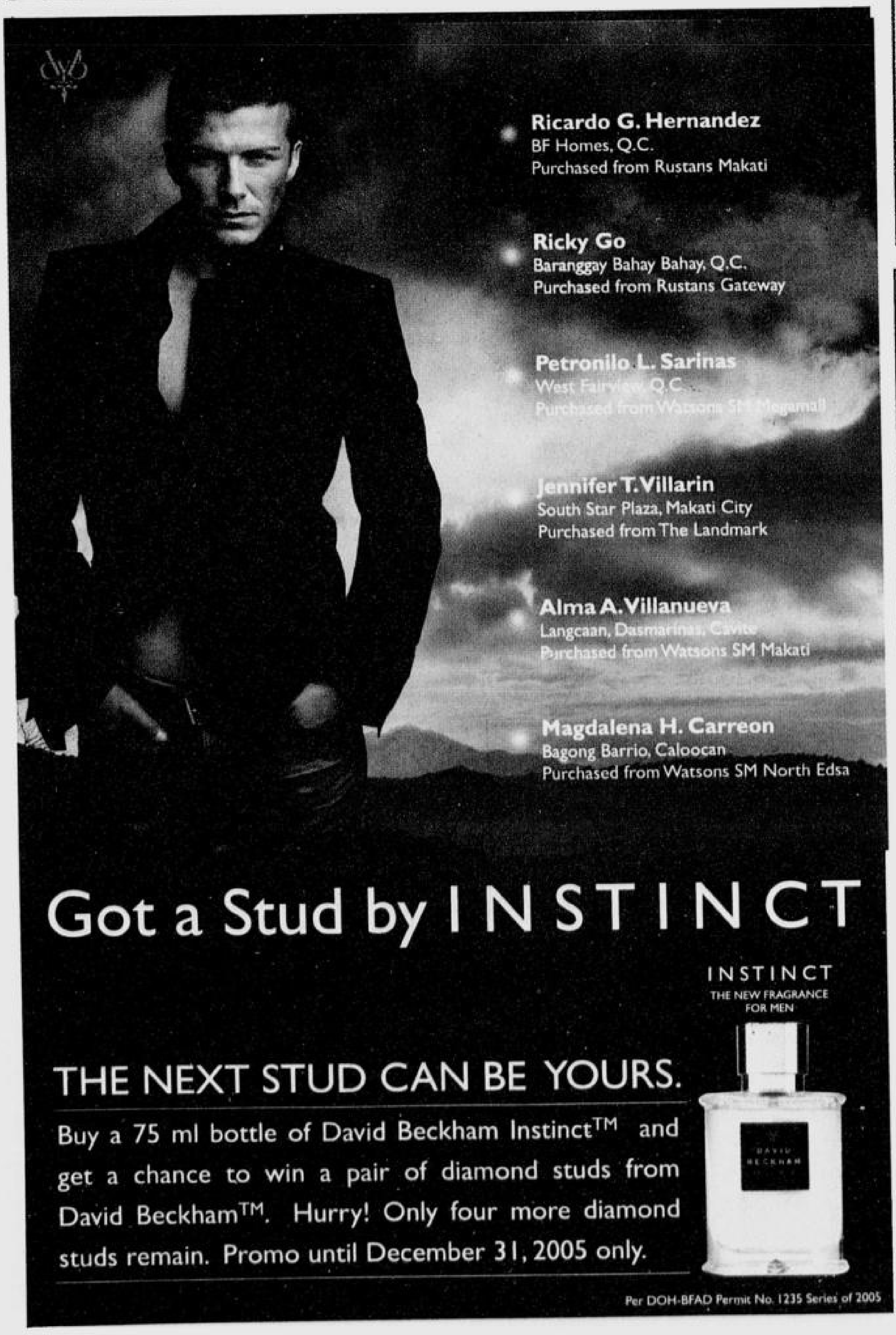
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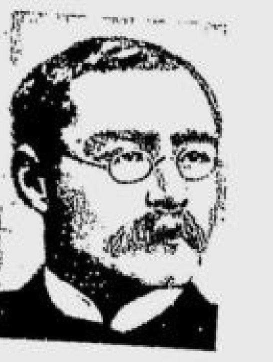
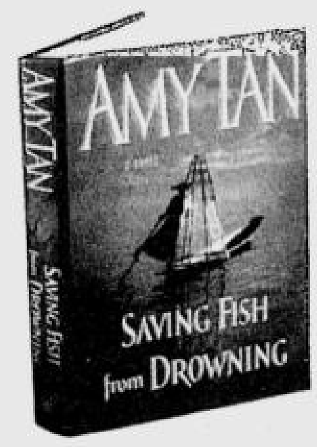
Great Kipling


RUDYARD Kipling

POWERBOOKS Specialty Store's Nobel Prize Pick for December is British author and poet Rudyard Kipling. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907 when he was in his early 40s, he is the youngest recipient of the prize to date.

Born on December 30, 1865, in Bombay, Rudyard's earliest years were blissfully happy in an India filled with beautiful and exotic sights and sounds. At 6, he was shipped off to England to live with a foster family, where he was unhappy. The poor treatment and neglect he experienced would later on reflect on his writings, particularly his sympathy with children. His best known works are "The Jungle Book," "The Second Jungle Book," "Captains Courageous," "The Day's Work," "Kim," "Gunga Din," "The Seven Seas," and "Just So Stories."

Powerbooks Specialty Store is at Greenbelt 4 (7576428 to 29), Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63), Glorietta (7527075), Shangri-La (6380023/25) and Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334/5243448).



'Ghost' novel

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AMY TAN ("THE Joy Luck Club," "The Bonesetter's Daughter") has a new novel, one narrated from beyond the grave.

In "Saving Fish From Drowning," San Francisco socialite and art-world doyenne Bibi Chen has planned the vacation of a lifetime into the southern Shan state of Burma for her dearest friends. Murdered violently days before takeoff, Bibi is reduced to watching her friends bumble through their travels from the spirit world.

Tan's travelers, who range from a neurotic hypochondriac to the debonair, self-involved host of a show called "The Fido Files," fight and flirt among themselves. While the ensemble casting precludes the intimacy that characterizes Tan's mother-daughter stories, the book branches out with a broad plot and dynamic digressions.

The novel is available at PowerBooks.

'Narnia' art contest

POWERBOOKS IS LAUNCHING THE "Draw Your Favorite Narnia Scene with Koko" art competition. Kids from 6 to 12 years old can create their own interpretation of a most-loved scene from "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," the first of the Chronicles that C.S. Lewis had written.

Participants can use any medium for their entries (a minimum size of 10"x18" mounted on a 11"x19" board to a maximum size of 16"x24" mounted on a 17"x25" board). They must include the Nestlé's mascot, the koala Koko. Contestants must register with the nearest PowerBooks branch. Deadline is Jan. 2, 2006.

PowerBooks is at Greenbelt 4 (7576428 to 29), Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63), Glorietta (7527075), Shangri-La (6380023/25) and Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334/ 5243448).

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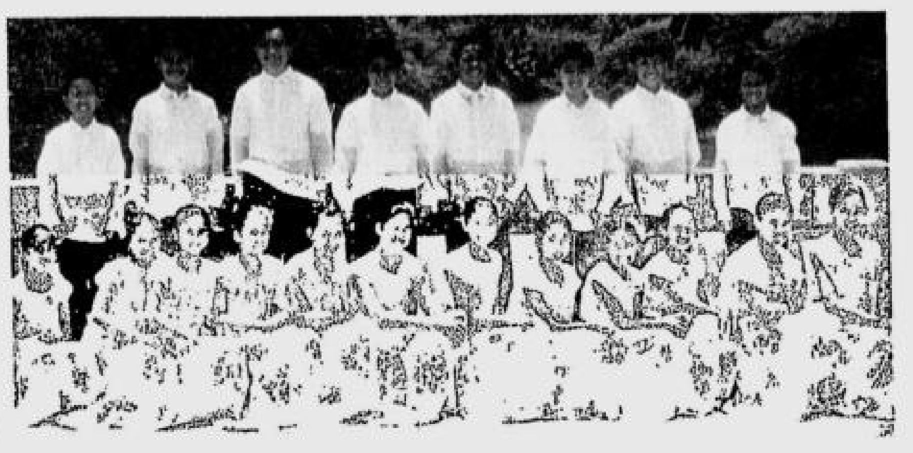
IN CONNECTION WITH THE Philippine Daily Inquirer's 20th anniversary, get a chance to win P3,000 PowerBooks gift certificates and be featured in the INQUIRER's pages by writing about the power of reading. For contest mechanics, log on to www.powerbooks.com.ph.

PUNDAQUIT Virtuosi


LOBOC Children's Choir

Lighting a million mornings for street children

Two youthful choirs will perform in a concert to benefit their less privileged peers

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

CHILDREN WILL STAGE A concert to bring light and restore hope to the lives of their fellow children. The Loboc Children's Choir and the Pundaquit Virtuosi will fuse their talents in a joint concert at 8 p.m., Jan. 6-7, 2006, at the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo Hall.

The show will benefit some 650 children of the Tuloy sa Don Bosco Streetchildren Village which rehabilitates street children, providing them with free shelter, basic education, medical services, counseling and therapy, and vocational skills. The founder is under the stewardship of Fr. Rocky Evangelista, SDB.

The concert will also feature two former child prodigies, both celebrated virtuoso violinists, Alfonso "Coke" Bolipata and Julian "Jojo" Quirit.

Bolipata conducts the Punduaquit Virtuosi while Quirit leads the Australian Pops Orchestra. The latter's daughter, Eliza Quirit, also a violin prodigy, will be soloist.

Singer-actress Cris Villongco is special guest performer.

JULIAN "Jojo" Quirit

Veteran stage and television director Leo Rialp directs the concert while musician Danny Favis is musical arranger. The two, who waived their professional fees for this benefit concert, are out to make a rare presentation.

In a press conference at the Bellevue Hotel in Ayala-Alabang, emceed by Iya de los Santos, the organizers, called Fr. Rocky's "Angels," stressed the importance of the project.

The businessmen, many of them members of the Rotary Club, commended Fr. Rocky's total approach to helping the kids, who accounted for only a small fraction of the estimated 200,000 street children in Metro Manila, instead of adopting "band-aid" remedies.

The organizers are, among others, Lily Chan, Chinggay Rode, Cora del Rosario, Corito Sarabia, Pollie de los Santos, Edwin Afzelius, Christian Espiritu, Carlos Pedrosa, David Coyiukiat, Tony Lucero, Jun Manas, Jun Umali, Johnny Chan and his sons Ryan and Patrick.

Fr. Antonio Molavin, SDB, who represented Fr. Evangelista, said at "Tuloy" the children underwent complete transformation. Bolipata and Lutgardo Labad, who was involved with the Loboc choir, expressed excitement over the collaboration of their groups for a noble, humanitarian cause.

Rialp said the program would be "very entertaining." He planned to let Tuloy children join in some numbers.

ALFONSO "Coke" Bolipata

The Loboc Children's Choir, conducted by Alma Fernando-Taldo with Baby Lina Jala on the piano, rendered some songs with cherubic charm that tugged at the hearts of the listeners especially when they did the concert theme song, "Light of a Million Mornings Has Dawned on Me."

The Pundaquit Virtuosi played with youthful zest Baroque pieces that included "Summer" from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

Tickets to the concert are available at the CCP Box Office, Hen-Lin Food Outlets and Sarabia Optical stores. Call 0906-5273079 or 0918-9128787.

Classical artists win over Candon

Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson said a return engagement was in order after the unusual standing ovation

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

AFTER THREE CONCERTS BY soprano Eleanor Calbes in one week in three different places (Philamlife Theater, Tuguegarao City and Aparri, Cagayan), pianist Jonathan Coo and I left at 4 a.m. from Aparri for the other side of northern Luzon-Candon, Ilocos Sur—and traveled for almost eight hours.

Soprano Rachelle Gerodias, baritone Noel Azcona and flutist GJ Herman Gomez would be coming from Manila in the evening of the same day.

No one in Candon remembers when the last live classical concert was held there.

PIANIST Hiyas Hila in Minnesota, USA

In nearby St. Joseph Institute, a functioning baby grand piano was found. A nun said live classical music was practically unthinkable in this part of Ilocos Sur. She agreed to lend the school's baby grand.

An indoor concert was not possible. The city general services office made an improvised stage on top of a 10-wheeler truck. An extension was held together by wood and shaky iron grill.

The stage did not seem able to hold the baby grand securely and it seemed unthinkable for guest speaker Bambi Harper to speak on top of a 10-wheeler truck to deliver her message on the need to conserve important national historic landmarks.

So an improvised stage where artists could be closer to the audience and where the baby grand piano would be safer was set up.

Candon apparently had no trouble appreciating arias and flute music. The audience was unusually silent, obviously enjoying Azcona's "Toreador Song" and Rachelle's Gerodias' "Musetta's Waltz."

When Gomez reappeared for Schubert's Sonata Arpeggione, after a well-accepted "Andalouse" by Pessard, the audience cheered. They also applauded enthusiastically Kasilag's arrangements of Philippine folk songs and were on their feet after the soprano's "Sa Kabukiran."

The town parish priest, Msgr. Ambrose Cabildo, yelled "Bravo!" after practically every number. Candon City Mayor Allen Singson was visibly ecstatic, and so was Harper.

FLUTIST GJ Herman Gomez

RACHELLE Gerodias with Noel Azcona

Rep. Eric Singson greeted the artists backstage and said a return engagement was in order after that unusual standing ovation.

Meanwhile, Hiyas Hila, former National Music Competition for Young Artists (Namcya) winner, won over 30 contestants in a concerto competition at University of Minnesota where she is a doctoral student in Musical Arts. Her winning piece was Mozart's Piano Concerto in A Major, K488.

On the jury were visiting conductor Robert Debbaut, David Hyslop, David Sieber and Lee Humphries, a student of eminent Jorge Bolet.

Hila's teacher now is Lydia Artemyuw, who won the Leeds Competition and was—like Cecile Licad—a Leventritt winner.

Another Namcya winner and product of the Philippine High School for the Arts, Oliver Salonga, is in town for a short vacation.

He will have a special Rizal Day Concert at the Pasig Museum, 5 p.m., Dec. 29. His program includes Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 31 in A Flat Major, Op. 110; Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B Flat Minor, Op. 35; and Prokofieff's Piano Sonata No. 7 in B Flat Major. Call 9017156 or 0910-8851136.

Cecile Licad returns to Manila last week of April to join the Best of the Philippines Concert Series.

Gantimpala's 'Sa Mga Kababaihan ng Malolos' on Rizal Day

GANTIMPALA THEATER Foundation (GTF), together with the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), presents "Sa Mga Kababaihan ng Malolos," a special stage presentation, on Dec. 30, 6 p.m., at the Concert at the Park Open-Air Auditorium, in historic Luneta, Manila.

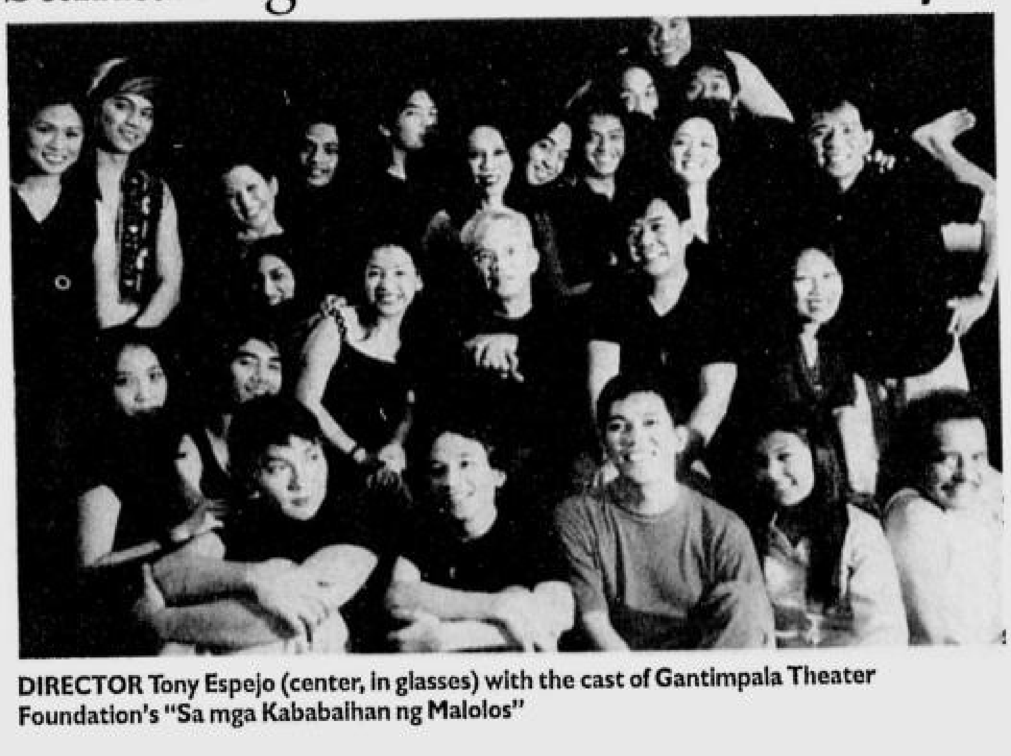
"Sa Kababaihan ng Malolos Atbp" is about the famous letter written by Dr. Jose Rizal, then based in London, to 20 Malolos women who petitioned Governor-General Weyler for permission to open a "night school" so they could study Spanish under Teodoro Sandiko.

M.H. Del Pilar, writing in Barcelona, requested Rizal to send a letter to these brave women. Accordingly, Rizal penned a letter of encouragement and sent it to Del Pilar on Feb. 22, 1889, for transmittal to Malolos.

The production features the GTF Actors Company: Nelia Aguado, Kakai Bautista, Pamela Hundana, Penny Galido, Gie Salonga, Lailanie Tejuco, Melinda Peña, Margie Ramos, and Adriana Agcaoili (Women of Malolos); Arkin de Guzman (José Rizal); Jay-R Dizon (Batang Rizal); Ces Aldaba (Governor General Weyler); Wowie de Guzman (Simoun); Joel Molina (Basilio); Yutaka Yamakawa Jr. (Juanito Pelaez); Karl Carasscal (Isagani); Ace Urieta (Macaraig) with Mark Cayabyab and Christopher David (students).

GTF artistic director Tony Espejo directs. Roobak Valle is co-director, co-writer and production designer. Adriana Agcaoili is writer. Andy Villarreal is lights designer. Lani Tapia is stage manager.

"Sa Kababaihan ng Malolos" is in support of the celebration of Rizal Day. The show is free and open to the public.


DIRECTOR Tony Espejo (center, in glasses) with the cast of Gantimpala Theater Foundation's "Sa mga Kababaihan ng Malolos"

THE NEW Voice Company ensemble

VIRATA, Laurel, Williams and Manahan in Rep's "Man of La Mancha"

A HAPPY and gay scene from "Aspects of Love"

Best musical shows of 2005

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE MUSE OF MUSIC—THAT QUEEN of the arts, along with poetry—continued with her regal ways during the last quarter of 2005.

The concerts, recitals and musicals were complemented by great or fine music from the ballet presentations: "Cinderella" (Philippine Ballet Theater), "An Angel Earns His Points" (Ballet Philippines) and "The Nutcracker" (Ballet Manila).

In the latter production that Sunday, taking over from ballerina Lisa Macuja and senior soloist Jerome Espejo, at Star City, it was the turn of soloists Gerardo Francisco and Marian Faustino to wow the big crowd, mostly students, with some bravura dancing.

Peta (Philippine Educational Theater Association), founded in 1967 by Cecile Guidote, finally has a home—the Peta Theater Center—located behind the Quezon City Sports Club.

The inaugural presentation was Mario O'Hara's "Ang Palasyo ni Valentin," with the fine, evocative music by Minda Azarcon and Vincent de Jesus often taking a back seat to the rather heavy-handed story, which unfolded like a *telenovela*. It was redeemed only by the acting of Nonie Buencamino, the singing of Cynthia Culig-Guico, the histrionics of Gigette Reyes, production values, and the compelling video footage (historical as well as featurized).

Andrew Lloyd Weber's "Aspects of Love" does not quite rank with the composer's blockbusters like "Evita" or "The Phantom of the Opera." But it has four memorable, tuneful songs which showcase Weber's melodic genius: "Love Changes Everything," "Seeing Is Believing," "The First Man You'll Remember," and the Sarah Brightman show-stopper, "Anything But Lonely."

And giving their all that evening at the Republic of Malate was the New Voice Company ensemble, including Monique Wilson (star and director), Jake Macapagal, Leo Rialp, and the versatile Rito P. Asilo.

Canada-based soprano Eleanor Calbes blew into town after a seven-year absence and gave a concert at Philamlife Theater. At a press conference by the Canadian Embassy, the effervescent Calbes recalled that way back when, she sang "Amapola" at Tawag ng Tanghalan, and the bell rang in the middle of the song! She promptly dissolved into tears.

The stricken hosts then hastened to add that the "teng!" only meant that the program was over. In the show the following week, she was the first to sing—"Amapola," of course.

Tribute to Yatco

The Manila Philharmonic Orchestra's tribute to Maestro Oscar C. Yatco (celebrating his 75th birthday) at the Philamlife Theater was a triumph not only for the master conductor but also for his protegé, violinist Chino Gutierrez, 15, who brilliantly interpreted Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto.

"You can imagine what he will be like four years from now," observed pianist Corazon Pineda. She should know: Her husband, the violinist Gilopez Kabayao, made his debut at Carnegie Hall, USA, when he was 19.

Speaking of the Kabayaos, they and their children (Farida, Sicilienne and Gilberto) gave a joyous, uplifting concert ("In Praise of Him") at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Friends consider the Kabayaos a national treasure, and the wonder is that Gilopez—who has devoted his life to spreading the gospel of classical music—is not yet a National Artist.

Our concert pianists are getting better and better all the time, at par with leading pianists in the West. First there was Austria-based Aima Maria Labra-Makk with the Metro Manila Community Orchestra and, more recently, also with the MMCO (at International School, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City), Cristine Coyuito, who essayed the difficult Shostakovich Piano Concert 2. Maestro Chino Toledo conducted with élan.

The most rousing concert of the year, greeted by ovations from a capacity crowd at the CCP, was the Toyota Classics Concert of the Budapest Operetta Theater Orchestra, led by the charismatic István Silló, who must be one of the leading conductors in Europe today. The singers were excellent, and so were the dancers; and the program was light, heady and intoxicating.

Another highlight of the season was the musical interpretation (with narration by Winnie Monsod) of the modern classic "The Diary of Anne Frank," a composition by Michael Tilson Thomas, with Eugene Castillo leading the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra at the CCP.

The concord of sweet sounds filled the majestic San Agustin Church, the country's oldest, during the 7th San Agustin International Music Festival. Spanish organist Jose Luis Echechipia was a star attraction, along with soprano Katrina Saporsantos and the Ateneo Glee Club led by Ma. Lourdes Hermo.

Saporsantos, along with Alexis Edralin, is one of our most exciting young sopranos today. The annual musicfest is a project of Father Pedro Galende, O.S.A., director of the San Agustin Museum.

Tenor to watch

At the University of Santo Tomas, tenor Jun Peñaverde held his graduation recital, his dulcet yet manly voice eliciting cheers from his growing number of admirers. Peñaverde later teamed up (again) with soprano Alexis Edralin for the "Whispering Hope" concert at Philamlife Theater.

The event was presented by the Philippine Laryngectomy Club for the benefit of victims of throat cancer. Thanks to technology, those who have lost their voices to cancer can speak—and even sing!—through an electronic device.

Galvanized by director Baby Barredo (with signature young actress Liezl Batucan as assistant director), Repertory Philippines pulled out all stops to mount "Man of La Mancha" at OnStage, Greenbelt 1. There was reason for the inspired production: It was dedicated to the late Zeneida "Bibot" Amador, who founded the Rep in 1967. Audie Gemora and Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo, among others in the cast, gave luminous performances.

Another Rep musical was "The Emperor's New Clothes," with Liezl Batucan shining as a soprano. The entertaining production was directed by actress-singer Joy Virata, who specializes in children's musicals.

At the CCP's Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino, a large-scale, abstract set design by Clint E.B. Ramos, conducive to judicious blocking and rapid movements at various levels, helped enliven Tanghalang Pilipino's "Noli Me Tangere the Musical," directed by Paul Morales, with music by Ryan Cayabyab, and libretto by the iconic Bienvenido Lumbera.

NONIE Buencamino and Cynthia Culig-Guico in Peta's "Ang Palasyo ni Valentin"

For the first quarter of 2006, we look forward to the duo concert of Otoniel Gonzaga and Lea Salonga, the oddly titled "Three Screaming Popes" number by the PPO led by Castillo Coke Bolipata with the MMCO, Oscar Yatco with classical guitarist Michael Dadap, a Dulaang UP musical about Gabriela Silang, and Tanghalang Pilipino's zany "ZsaZsa Zaturninah."

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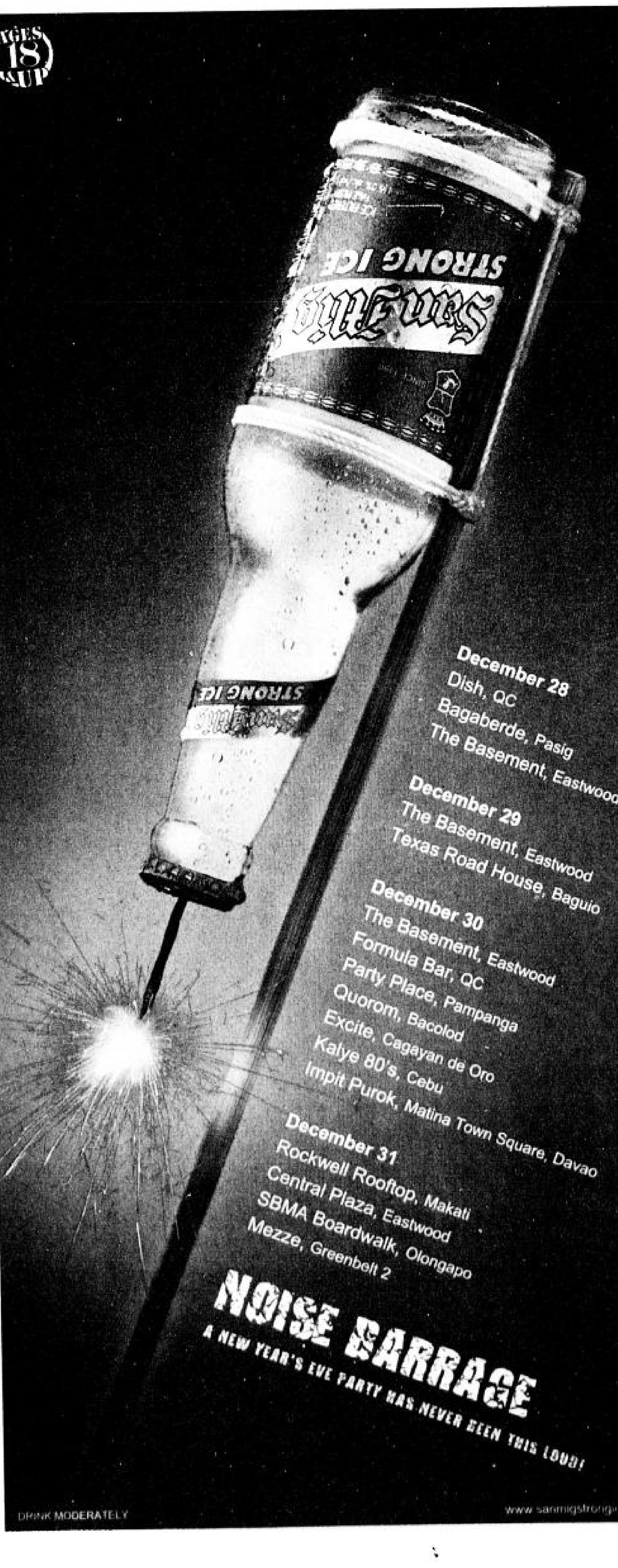

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Noli Me Tangere 2

'Noli Me Tangere' now

From page D1

way. You can change the face and the mood of this land. This is the only hope of our land for a significant, lasting, peaceful reform."

Sounds more like Tasyo, the philosopher.

But Olivares' commentaries in his version of "Noli" have made fans out of some of the country's more respected politicians.

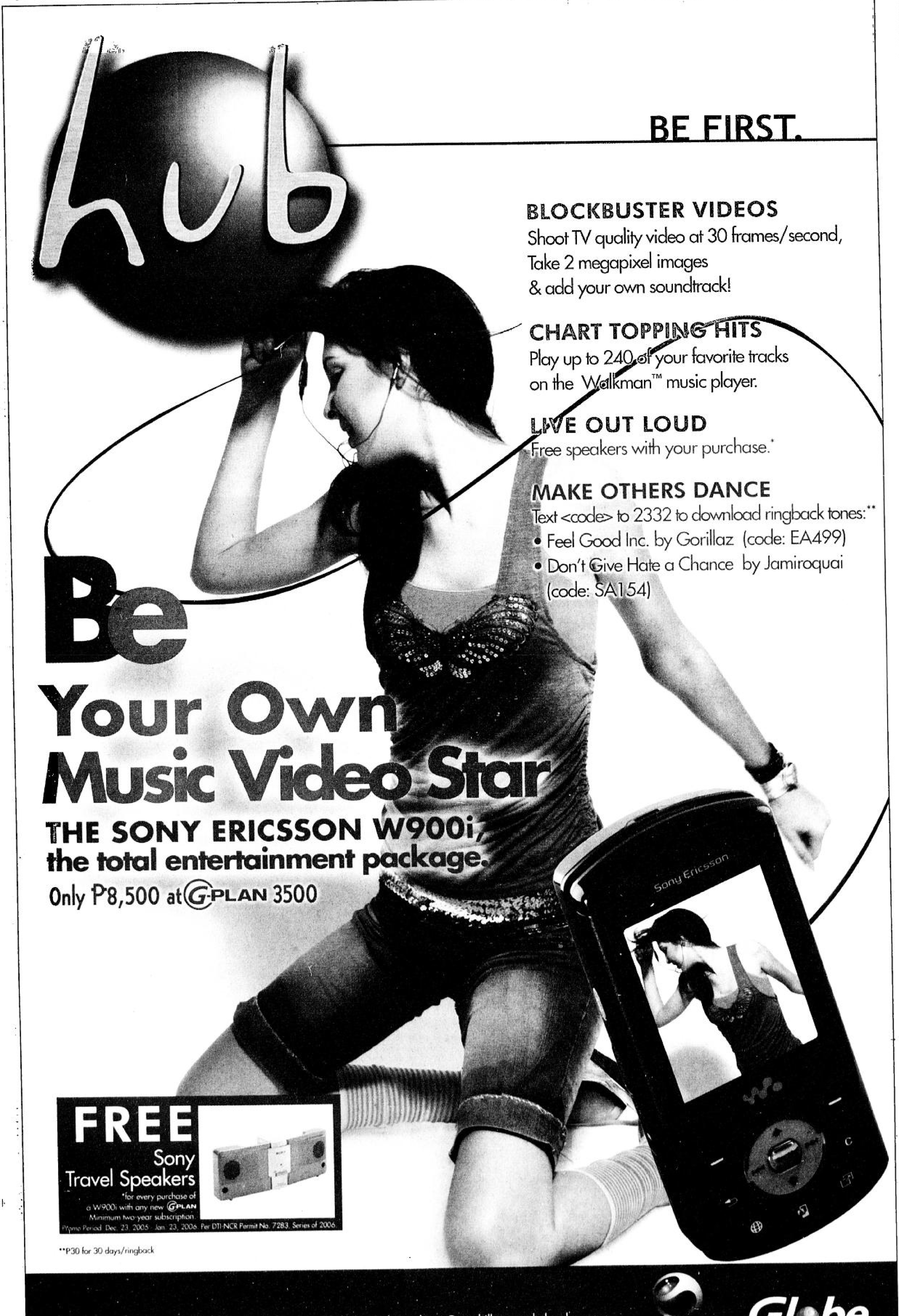
Former Senate president Jovito Salonga finds this book "extremely fascinating, relevant and thought-provoking."

Senator Joker Arroyo says it would be "an excellent companion piece to Rizal's original, a must and easy read for all."

For its ambition and boldness, this new "Noli" deserves reading and a space on the shelf.

CHRISTIAN DAILY PLANNER

New Day Publishers "Each Day, A New Day" is a journal that includes calendars and slots for entries of important coming events. It has insightful passages from the Bible, reflections from people who experienced God's faithfulness, prayers to commend the day's activities to God, as well as nature photographs. The journal may be a good gift to relatives and friends this New Year. Call 9288046 or 9275982. E-mail newdayorders@edsamail.com.ph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